

Forty-Third
National Convention
Socialist Labor Party

May 2 – 5, 1997

Minutes, Reports, Resolutions, Etc.



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*PROCEEDINGS OF THE
43RD NATIONAL CONVENTION
SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY*

May 2–5, 1997

Days Inn Hotel
Santa Clara, Calif.

MORNING SESSION, FRIDAY, MAY 2, 1997

National Secretary Robert Bills called the 43rd National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party to order at 9:18 a.m. with the following remarks:

Greetings:

In 1864, it seemed that the Civil War might drag on indefinitely, that the carnage would never stop, and that final triumph would forever elude the Union cause. A full year had passed since the Battle of Gettysburg, where the Union army experienced its greatest triumph of the war and the Confederate army its greatest defeat, but the war continued to rage.

After Gettysburg, an atmosphere of grumbling and impatience seemed to grow up in the country. By the summer of 1864, there was an uproar among newspapers and politicians against Abraham Lincoln's supposed ineptness in conducting the war. He seemed incapable of putting together the military leadership needed to deliver the coup de grace. Some wanted to let the South go, despite all the sacrifices made and all the blood shed to prevent that from happening. Some wanted Lincoln out of office and a new man installed who would conclusively smash the Army of Virginia and bring the Confederacy to its knees.

Nonetheless, the Republican Party nominated Lincoln for a second term in June of 1864, and when the Democrats met in August to pick their man to replace him, they chose George C. McClellan, the very same man that Lincoln had removed as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Dissatisfaction with Lincoln did not confine itself to the Democratic Party. There were dissenters within the Republican Party as well, and there were just enough of them to

gather in convention at Cleveland to nominate their own man to challenge Lincoln and to replace him.

Despite all the ill will toward Lincoln, despite all the verbiage produced by the newspaper editors over the great need to find a Republican replacement, and despite the great noise raised by disgruntled Republican politicians, the Cleveland convention was a failure. No one among the editors and politicians who were critical of Lincoln's leadership wanted to try their hand at filling his shoes.

When someone asked Lincoln what he thought about the proceedings of that convention, he replied with one of his characteristic yarns. He said that the men who gathered in Cleveland reminded him "of two fresh Irishmen who attempted to find a tree-toad that they heard in the forest. After a fruitless hunt, one of them consoled himself and his companion with the expression, 'an' faith it was nothing but a noise.'"

National Conventions of the Socialist Labor Party are dissident gatherings. However, the "toad" they are after is neither man nor beast, and it certainly is not a "noise."

We are dissenters—not among ourselves, but from a social system that heaps miseries and indignities on our class and turns society into a self-devouring vipers' nest of competing forces.

We aim to end a social system that "leads two great armies into the field against each other, and each of these again...in a battle among its own troops in its own ranks."

We aim to replace "the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, [with a new] association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

We aim after socialism, but if socialism seems too slow to come—if success seems to elude the SLP, and if failure seems to dog at our heels—we should not be deceived by the "noise." We cannot deceive ourselves as Lincoln's detractors deceived themselves. Lincoln was the man for the hour, and the SLP is the party for our time.

There is "prosperity" in America today, or so we are told. Workers have been told the same thing before, of course, only to find that capitalist prosperity always turns out to be an illusion for the working class. In 1904, for example, the

Republican Party said the working class was prospering, and De Leon took note of it in the *Daily People* when he wrote:

The Republican party has issued a broadside of statistics. It is several feet long by several feet wide. And what is more, altho' it is heralded by its headlines as an argument for the Republican party, it is in fact an argument for the Socialist Labor Party, being especially and above all a crack over the head of those who claim that Socialism is all very well, but too far away, while something now will step by step lead to deliverance. ("Does Socialism Take Too Long to Come?" *Daily People*, Sept. 27, 1904.)

De Leon cited the figures the Republican Party based its claims on, and he concluded that increased working-class "prosperity" came to less than seven mills—seven-tenths of a penny—over a period of nearly 35 years.

If Socialism is slow [De Leon wanted to know], what is this? Surely it is no breakneck rapidity. A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush. But then it is a bird you have in the hand and not a phantom. What are seven mills a day in thirty years? Is that any better than a phantom?

To test whether seven-tenths of a penny could be translated into increased prosperity for workers, De Leon added, some other numbers were needed—"the number of unemployed in the working class and the increased price of the necessities of life."

Those numbers were missing, but they really were not necessary because, as De Leon continued:

...[E]very workingman is a living statistical report in himself. He knows how, from rent down, everything that he needs has gone up. When allowance is made for that, when the declined purchasing power of his dollar is considered, owing to the rise in his necessities of life, the seven mills increase is wiped out, leaving a big hole in even the original sum. Thus the "progress" made by Labor under capitalist and fakir guidance has been the crab's progress—backward!

The numbers have changed over the years, but the principle has not. The exploitation of the working class increases, and capitalist "prosperity" is nothing more than a fiction and a fraud.

Socialism cannot come over night [De Leon went on to say]. It needs agitation, education and organization to bring it about. None but dupes will fail to realize, from the above authentic figures and irrefutable argument, that he who says: "Socialism is all very well, only it is too far away!" and then tries to lead the workers on other than the Socialist path, leads them away from what he himself is forced to admit is "all very well," and is but delaying the day of Labor's emancipation; aye, is doing his utmost to postpone the day to the utmost.

* * * * *

All thanks to the Republican party for the statistical broadside that cracks the skull of all the defenders of capitalism—the hypocritical crew not excepted that says: "Socialism is all very well, but too far away!"

The promise of socialism may seem remote, but the evil promise held out by a decadent and dying capitalist system is not.

The Socialist Labor Party may seem old, but that is no strike against it: Capitalism is much older.

Socialists may seem isolated from the working class, but they have powerful allies, first, in a capitalist system that is working out its own undoing by the social crimes it perpetrates on the working class and, second, all those who speak for it or who seek to distract the working class from the promise that socialism holds. The latter are the "left," the "right" and the "middle" hands of capitalism—three hands, as befits a social system that grows increasingly perverse and grotesque with every passing day. They are, wittingly or unwittingly, political Sirens "who by their sweet singing" try to lure workers to destruction on the reform or reactionary rocks surrounding capitalism.

You have been elected by the members of the Socialist Labor Party to plan the Party's work for the next two years. The membership has placed their confidence in you to do that job to the utmost of your abilities. I share in that confidence, and in the anticipation that your deliberations will prove to be successful in every important respect, I take great pleasure in calling this 43rd National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party of America to order.

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Temporary Organization

- C. Camacho was elected temporary Chairperson.
- B. Cozzini was elected temporary Recording Secretary.
- D. Bills was appointed assistant to the temporary Recording Secretary.
- J. Parker was appointed temporary Sergeant at Arms.

Election of Credentials Committee (3)

On motion, S. Fink, P. Kapitz and H. Coretz were elected to constitute the committee.

At 9:35 a.m. the convention recessed for 15 minutes to allow the committee to do its work. Reconvened at 10:55 a.m.

S. Fink presented the following report:

Your committee reports the following regular delegates have presented credentials, and we recommend that they be seated:

Section San Francisco Bay Area (1): Bruce Cozzini; Section Cook County (1): Henry Coretz; Section Minneapolis (1): Karl Heck; Section Akron (1): Peter Kapitz; Section Cleveland (1): Robert Burns; Section Portland (1): Sid Fink; Section Philadelphia (1): George S. Taylor; Section Milwaukee (1): David Geier; National Members-at-Large (3): Bernard Bortnick, Christian Camacho, Charles Turner.

National Member-at-Large Delegate Michael James is absent.

National Member-at-large Delegate Daniel Vogt informed the National Office that he would be unable to attend.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] SID FINK, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, PETER KAPITZ
Credentials Committee

On motion, the report was accepted and the delegates seated.

Election of Agenda Committee (3)

On motion, K. Heck, G.S. Taylor and D. Geier were elected to constitute the committee.

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At 10 a.m. a 10-minute recess was declared to allow the committee to do its work. Reconvened at 10:07 a.m.

K. Heck presented the following report:

The committee recommends that the following be adopted as the convention's agenda:

Friday Morning Session, May 2

1. Permanent Organization
 - a) Election of Chairperson
 - b) Election of Vice Chairperson
 - c) Election of Recording Secretary
 - Appointment of Assistant to Recording Secretary
 - d) Appointment of Sergeant at Arms (by Chair)
 - e) Election of Mileage Committee (2)
2. Determination of Attendance Policy
3. Report of Sergeant at Arms
4. Report of the National Secretary (such sections as can be read)
5. Adjournment to Afternoon Session

Friday Afternoon Session, May 2

1. Roll Call
2. Report of Sergeant at Arms
3. Report of the National Secretary (completion)
4. Introduction of Resolutions
5. Discussion of Sections of National Secretary's Report
6. Adjournment to Saturday Morning Session

Saturday Morning Session, May 3

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Reading of Minutes of Previous Sessions
4. Report of Sergeant at Arms
5. Discussion of National Secretary's Report (if necessary)
6. Unfinished Business
7. New Business (including Resolutions from Delegates)
8. Determination of Committees
9. Referring Matters to Committees
10. Election of Committees
11. Adjournment to Next Session

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

Order of Business for All Subsequent Sessions

1. Call to Order
2. Election of Chairperson (if necessary)
3. Election of Vice Chairperson (if necessary)
4. Roll Call
5. Report of Sergeant at Arms
6. Reading of Minutes of Previous Day's Sessions (Morning Session Only)
7. Unfinished Business
8. Reports of Committees
9. New Business (*Last Day*—only matters that can be given immediate attention)
10. *Last Day*—Reading of Minutes
11. Adjournment

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] KARL H. HECK, Chair
DAVID W. GEIER, GEORGE S. TAYLOR
Credentials Committee

On motion, the report was adopted.

Permanent Organization

Election of a Chairperson: C. Camacho and B. Cozzini were nominated. The vote by a show of hands was C. Camacho—5, B. Cozzini—5. The temporary Chair then cast his vote for Cozzini. B. Cozzini was elected Chairperson.

Election of Vice Chairperson: C. Camacho and D. Geier were nominated. C. Camacho was elected Vice Chairperson by a show of hands: C. Camacho—8, D. Geier—2.

Election of Recording Secretary: D. Geier and C. Turner were nominated. The vote by a show of hands was D. Geier—5, C. Turner—5. The Chair then cast his vote for Geier. D. Geier was elected Recording Secretary.

D. Bills was appointed assistant to the Recording Secretary.

J. Parker was appointed Sergeant at Arms.

Election of Mileage Committee (2)

On motion, C. Camacho and G.S. Taylor were elected to constitute the committee.

A motion, made and seconded, to recess for 10 minutes was not concurred in.

Determination of Attendance Policy

On motion, this convention will be an open convention.
The Sergeant at Arms reported six visitors present.

Report of the National Secretary

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Introduction

I do not recall if I wrote to the members elected as delegates to this convention to urge them to review the published proceedings of recent NEC Sessions and other National Conventions, particularly the proceedings of the NEC Sessions and National Conventions held since 1993, before this convention convened. If I neglected to do that it is only a reflection on conditions that exist at the National Headquarters at present, and I apologize for it.

At the same time, however, most delegates to this convention have been delegates to past conventions, and some are presently members of the NEC. Those who have served as delegates in the past and are members of the NEC should have taken the initiative, regardless of any urging they may have received from the National Office, and reviewed those proceedings in preparation for this convention. Those who have made such a review on their own initiative should have come here with the background they will need to discharge their responsibilities in grappling with the National Headquarters situation, and with other matters that will come before you during these proceedings. Those who, for lack of experience or for some other reason, did not make such a review should still be aware that the National Headquarters situation is not a good one and has not been for a number of years. This should be so even with those who may not be familiar with the particulars.

Accordingly, there should be nothing in what follows that comes as a surprise or a shock to any delegate in the hall. The time for that is past. As certain as we are in our hearts

that the SLP spirit is indestructible, by now we should all be aware that the SLP flesh is not, and that if we are not prepared with our minds to come to grips with the problems our Party faces in the calm and dispassionate manner they require, the SLP flesh may very well “go the way of all flesh.”

What I am placing before you today is a body of facts, nothing more and nothing less. At any rate, they are the facts as I see them, and, in all essential respects, as the National Headquarters staff sees them. As I emphasized to the NEC when it met in Regular Session in March of 1996, “Facts...have no motives of their own; and facts, by their very nature, are never wrong, or else they would not be facts.”

Here it might be well to repeat more of what I said on that occasion:

Far from the growth one would expect [today]...the SLP is immersed in a seemingly incongruous struggle to survive. Incongruous and inexplicable as this may seem to us, it is a fact, and as De Leon once observed about Socialists and facts together:

“The first prerequisite to make a Socialist is the capacity to see facts and the willingness to adhere to them without qualification.” (*The People*, April 10, 1898.)

Facts, however, can be like the cannonball De Leon once used to illustrate a point.

“Did you ever stop to look at and consider a cannonball? It is a thing worth contemplating. The birds of the fields may hop upon and twitter on it their love songs; spiders may stretch their webs from one cannonball to the other, and in peaceful quiet wait for the stray fly; kindergarten children may hold a May Day picnic there, and play hide-and-seek around a cannonball pile—all the symptoms of peace may cluster around a cannonball in idyllic form. And yet the cannonball is intended for war, for turmoil, for destruction, for bloodshed, for death. How is that? That which the cannonball is intended for comes not into operation until it is in motion; *at rest* the cannonball is ineffectual; it becomes effectual only when in *motion*.”

“So with facts. Gathered in statistical collections; enumerated in archives; listed even in the columns of a paper, these facts would be no more effectual than cannonballs at rest; their effectiveness steps in only when they are fired at error. What the propelling gunpowder is to the cannonball, that is the editorial argument to facts.” (*The People*, August 14, 1898.)

In other words, facts are only as good as the uses made of them, and to make good use of them they must first be acknowledged for what they are.

That the SLP has its problems cannot come as a revelation to anyone. Some of those problems have existed for many years....

Nonetheless, certain decisions that facts forced the Party to make in recent years apparently did come as a shock to some members of the Party. They came as a shock despite efforts made to keep the membership informed of developments and their potential for inflicting further damage on *The People* and on the Party's capacity to absorb its losses, to regroup its forces, to strengthen its resolve, and then to move forward.

Those facts did not arise with the purpose of shocking anyone. Facts have no motives of their own. They were simply presented for what they were....

To put it another way: What I am placing before you to-day is a body of *information*. However, that body of information is not meant as an appeal to the emotions. It is not meant to turn optimists into pessimists, or pessimists into optimists, to stir the SLP heart or to send it into palpitations. It is not aimed at the heart at all. It is aimed at the SLP minds that have gathered in this hall, and it is meant to be absorbed, distilled and used to fashion a Party-building program.

With our hearts in check, and with our minds bent to the task, this convention *will* forge such a program.

On motion, this section of the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

National Headquarters

Two years ago I began the National Headquarters section of my report to the 42nd National Convention with a letter I had recently written to the NEC, and with a summary of developments affecting the headquarters operation since 1993.

Portions of a similar letter written to the present NEC under date of March 31 are inserted below. Before getting to that, however, a review similar to the one submitted to the 1993 convention is in order. However, unlike the earlier review, I will not focus on developments within National Headquarters, but on how the National Conventions, the NEC and the Party as a whole have responded to the head-

quarters situation. To do that, another repetition of what I repeated from the 1993 convention report when reporting to the 1996 NEC Session is necessary.

If my report to the 42nd National Convention were to be boiled down to its essence, the kernel would be found in the following passages:

“From what has been presented here, it should be apparent that publication of *The People* cannot continue with the physical resources available...we have gone from what was, at best, a woefully inadequate “editorial staff” to virtually no editorial staff at all....The National Office has virtually been absorbed by the editorial department and cannot function properly.”

Nonetheless, the convention adopted measures directing the staff to “maintain a publication schedule for *The People* consistent with its resources, other priorities and assistance it is receiving from the membership.” A summary of the assistance the staff had received before the convention was included in my report....

The convention also called upon the membership to “recognize the gravity of the situation,” to “make immediate and renewed efforts” to supply articles for publication and to make efforts to increase *The People’s* circulation in their areas.

Thereafter I enumerated the response members gave to the 1993 convention’s appeal for articles to help keep *The People* in print, and returned to what the convention had decided, as follows:

To its recommendations appealing to the membership to “recognize the gravity of the situation,” to “make immediate and renewed efforts” to supply articles for publication and to make efforts to increase *The People’s* circulation in their areas, the convention added the following:

“The decision to publish even at a reduced frequency and content can only be considered successful if the National Headquarters staff is unburdened to perform other Party work, their stressful hours reduced, and *The People* is serving an agitational and educational purpose, i.e., it is reaching more workers.

“If these results are not apparent then the National Secretary will call upon the NEC to develop alternatives.”

In my judgment, the results are apparent....

In addition, the Party’s financial situation has not improved. Remaining reserves alone are insufficient to see us through the current lease, which expires on July 31, 1997, unless expenses can be reduced and income enhanced by significant amounts. Although operating expenses were reduced by

about \$36,000 in 1995, compared to those for 1994, months in which routine expenses outrun receipts by margins of five-to-one, or more, are now commonplace.

Accordingly, I now call upon the NEC “to develop alternatives,” in accordance with the instructions given to me by the 42nd National Convention.

The results that seemed apparent to me at the time (apart from the positive support *The People* received from SLP writers in the field), were that the “gambit” for prolonging publication had failed because the membership as a whole had not lived up to the commitment made at the 1995 convention. While the NEC expressed gratification that the writers had kept up their good work, while it expressed concern over the unchanged working conditions at National Headquarters, and while it sought to alleviate those conditions somewhat by choosing a reduction in the frequency of publication (in preference to permanent suspension), it took no notice whatever of the membership’s failure to act on convention decisions that called upon them to take certain action. Furthermore, no specific action (such as the present SLP Defense Fund) was taken to contend with the deteriorating financial situation.

Time was clearly of the essence. If the membership failed to increase the circulation of the paper in their areas by selling subscriptions, and if it failed to respond to the Party’s financial problems, time would eventually run out. No one could predict how much time the membership had to do its part in what was supposed to be a Party effort—not a headquarters effort, or an effort by the headquarters and the five or six members sending articles for *The People*.

I believe the headquarters staff held up its end, but that is for you to decide. I believe that the members who contributed articles held up their end, at least that particular part of their end. The Party, however, did not hold up its end, and that fact was ignored by last year’s NEC Session.

During an exchange of letters I had with a national member-at-large after the 1995 National Convention, he wrote to express concern that nothing had been done about the headquarters staffing problem. What he wrote, in part, was the following:

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I believe, maybe I'm wrong, but had the National Secretary made an impassioned plea for help at the N.O. at this past convention and instructed the delegates that a solution must be found before this convention can adjourn, maybe then something positive may have come out of the convention regarding the N.O. problem.

I know we are a voluntary party and can't be ordered to do anything, but I believe there are those who could help but who are voluntarily not helping in a meaningful way.

This member is a good member, a veteran member, a member who worked at National Headquarters in years gone by. He is a member who has said he would gladly do so again, if he were younger. Furthermore, there is not a shred of doubt in my mind that he would make good on that statement, if he could. As good, as solid and as sincere as this member is, however, I believe he has misunderstood the nature of the problems the Party is facing at this juncture. At any rate, he seemed to misread or read over what has been said on that score at previous National Conventions and NEC Sessions. In reply, I wrote, in part, as follows:

A whole series of pleas, similar to what you mention, have been made at virtually every National Convention of the 1990s, not to mention the 1994 NEC Session. Whether they were sufficiently eloquent or impassioned I cannot say. However, that was then and this is now—and the problem is not quite as simple or direct as it used to be. While help is needed, the Party can no longer afford to pay for more than it already has. That's why the special [writers'] conference that was held in September 1994 was so important.

...Delegates to National Conventions have repeatedly affirmed that their sections can do more, yet the sections have invariably done less...Shrinking numbers, advancing age, various levels of commitment and self-discipline, declining morale—these and other factors play their part.

* * * * *

The headquarters staff cannot rebuild the SLP. You can't build a political party from behind a desk. The membership has to do the work. If the membership decides it's too old, too tired, or that it's done its share, then the game is up. The Party has only one membership, and if it is to regenerate itself that membership must overcome all the problems of age, illness, etc., and do what needs doing—and they have to do it fast. Since the last National Convention, however, the sections are doing less than ever, and it is reflected in the activities column

of *The People*. Indeed, when you receive the issue of December 23 [1995] you will notice that there is no activities column—probably for the first time ever.

I believe that this particular exchange of letters (there were several) is indicative of a much wider misperception of the nature of the problems confronting the SLP and how those problems must be dealt with. Furthermore, I believe that misperception reaches into the NEC itself. In November 1995, for example, an NEC member wrote a letter that contained the following:

I think we are overlooking a psychological factor as to what moves people to do things. The current dissatisfaction is not enough to attract the working people to a revolutionary program. What I believe is missing and needed in our “theory and practice” is to develop an image, a materialistic vision of what a socialist world would bring to them. What we desire to create must accompany our explanation of the inadequacies of capitalism....It is my thought that we must fuse the vision of a socialist society and its real benefits in our newspaper and literature. We do that but only in a brief and muted way. The working class, successfully bribed by reforms...has come to believe that nothing could be substantially better. They need a new hope, a dream (please don't sneer) to move them and give them a thrust towards the revolutionary change.

* * * * *

As a salesman I learned that: [“You don't try to sell the steak; sell the sizzle!” In other words...I am not saying we need to swap Daniel De Leon for Edward Bellamy[,] but we need more than a touch of Bellamy. Our leaflet *Socialism—Its Meaning and Promise* is on the road to a tendency which should be more developed.

I know that this NEC member did not mean that we should try to entice workers with the shadow (sizzle) rather than the substance (steak), and I did not “sneer.” I did not call to his attention the contradiction between the idea that there is working-class “dissatisfaction” and that the working class has been “successfully bribed by reforms.” I did not remind him that De Leon himself left the Bellamy movement because it appealed only to preachers and professors, not to workers, or that after *Looking Backward* went up like a flare it came down like a stone. What I replied, in part, was this:

You say that the leaflet *Socialism: Its Meaning and Prom-*

ise “is on the road to a tendency that should be more developed.” We updated and reprinted that leaflet in April 1992. The printing was small—only 25,000 copies—and yet we still have some in stock. It’s not a “best seller.” Indeed, none of our leaflets are hot sellers with the membership. Last year, [your] Section...distributed less than 400 leaflets, while the Party as a whole distributed only 106,000 leaflets. To me, “what’s missing and needed in our ‘theory and practice’” is not theory, but *practice*. The reason we don’t get contacts is that the membership does not distribute the leaflets we have, not because we don’t have leaflets on what socialism will be like.

There may be merit in calling on members to become leafleting volunteers again. When I did that before it was because I was desperate to get members to do what they should have been doing routinely all along. I did not consider the response successful because it did not live up to my expectations. That was probably a mistake. I should have pursued it.

However, the fact remains that 100 determined members could still distribute more than 2.5 million leaflets a year if they really wanted to. If, for example, 100 retired members each distributed 100 leaflets on a single day, the distribution would come to 10,000 leaflets. That would translate into 10 contacts and five new subscriptions for *The People* for one day’s work. One hundred members doing the same thing for five days would result in 50,000 leaflets distributed—nearly one-half last year’s total—yield 50 contacts and 25 new subscriptions for one week’s work. By repeating that process 52 times, the results would be a distribution of 2.6 million leaflets, 2,600 contacts and 1,300 subscriptions. By repeating it only 26 times, the distribution would still come to 1.3 million, the Party would make 1,300 contacts and 650 new subscriptions would be added to the list. Even if it were repeated only a dozen times, i.e., one week a month for one year, the distribution would come to 600,000 (almost six times as many as in 1994), and the Party would make 600 new contacts and *The People* would gain 300 subscriptions. Why, only 50 members doing this for only 12 weeks would distribute 300,000 leaflets, produce 300 contacts and 150 new subscribers!

The question is, how do we get that number of members to do that much work for the SLP? To my way of thinking, that’s the theoretical nut that needs cracking.

Whether there is yet time enough to crack that nut I cannot say. What I do know, however, is that whatever time there may be is less than it was last year or the year before.

This convention cannot solve the headquarters problem. It cannot solve the headquarters problem even if members

with the necessary qualities, qualifications and background were found who were willing to step into even the most critical of the long-standing vacancies—the offices of Editor and Financial Secretary. The only thing that delegates can do at this convention is to assess the current headquarters situation and decide where the remaining resources might fit into any Party-building program of activity that is decided.

Here, then, is most of what I wrote to the NEC on March 31 to describe what that headquarters situation is at present:

Dear Comrades:

This is a long overdue summary of the National Headquarters situation. I have been putting it off, or rather have been forced to put it off, for some time. Though I will not dwell on my own workload here, it ultimately explains why I have not had time to systematically take stock, think through and sort out the essential from the incidental, and to organize the result in anything approximating a comprehensive fashion. Even now I must write in broad strokes.

First, Comrade Gunderson's cancer has returned again, as it did in 1995, and once again she is undergoing chemotherapy treatments. Where this will lead I cannot say....Regardless, she is 75 years old and understandably does not have the same level of energy and does not function with the same efficiency as she once did. She is a fighter, however, and the success she has had in coping with her health problems in the past lays ground for saying [that] nothing would surprise me. Still, it would be reckless to ignore the facts and not to be apprehensive about the business office.

Second, Comrade Karp has shown remarkable perseverance in confronting his own health problems. However, he readily confesses to how difficult it now is for him to write. Writing, of course, is not his main assignment. His main assignment is to sort through the voluminous archives and prepare them for transfer to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Though he puts in only two or three days a week, depending on the week, and though he has made considerable progress, I cannot see how he can possibly finish the job before the lease expires at the end of July. We have discussed this in a general way from time to time, and concluded that there may come a point at which it will be necessary to simply crate up what remains and ship it off without sorting through it. That is not desirable for many reasons, but now I am starting to wonder if there is even enough time for that. I have not discussed this with him recently, but will have to do so soon. Obviously,

the more pressure that time and other factors exert on him to finish the job, in one way or the other, the less he will have to devote to helping on *The People*. In addition, and...as with all of us, there are personal considerations to take into account because they can and do have an impact on how the headquarters operates.

Third, and pursuing the latter point, it is necessary to report that...all...household responsibilities...now fall on Comrade Ken Boettcher alone....His son is an adult, but his daughter is a teenager. His other job, i.e., his full-time job, is a night job, and this obviously presents him with serious problems. Recently, his other employer offered him an opportunity to work the day shift, and there is no question that accepting the offer is the right thing for him to do on a personal level. However, to maintain a part-time schedule at National Headquarters, he has asked for another change in hours that, under any other circumstances, I would have dismissed as wholly unacceptable. On certain days, for example, he proposes that he work from 5:30 to 9:30 a.m., i.e., that he would be in and out almost before anyone else came to work. He has also proposed some weekend work, when no one is here but me. Apart from the minor inconvenience that his presence in the office on Saturday would cause me (it is the one day I have without interruptions and incidental distractions), it is important to remember that he is our in-house computer expert. If the new schedule goes into effect it is easy to see how the headquarters could, and inevitably would, be disrupted. If a computer goes down it not only will have to wait, no one will be here to explain the problem. You can easily imagine some of the other problems this coming change poses for me and for the headquarters generally. This is not viable, but without other staffing options I frankly don't know what to do about it....

Fourth, for many years the SLP has worked with three outside companies to produce *The People* and get it into the mail, a printer, a mailer and a mailing list-maintenance house. (The layout and makeup are done in-house on computers by Comrade Boettcher, who takes a special computer disk to an output service that makes the actual stat from which the printing plate is made. The pasteup is done at the National Office.) A few years ago, the mailing list-maintenance house, which generates the mailing labels you find on your copy of *The People*, changed hands. Things went smoothly enough for a number of years. Last summer, however, they messed up badly on a number of occasions, and things got so bad that the owner of the company that does the actual mailing had to unscramble the mess himself before he could mail one of our issues. It soon became apparent that we would either have to drop the mailing list company and find a replacement, or bring the mailing

list back in-house. It was decided to do the latter. Fortunately, we already had a mailing list program that we bought many years ago. However, because it is IBM based, and because Comrade Donna Bills had the only IBM-based computer, that never happened. (Comrade Diane Secor was the subscription clerk in those days, but she had serious health problems and was forced to leave her job. Consequently, she was never able to learn the mailing list program.) At any rate, the decision to bring the mailing list back in-house also meant it was necessary to rebuild the old IBM-based computer; and as things developed it was necessary for Comrade Donna Bills to teach the mailing list program to herself. It also turned out that this particular program, though it was specifically designed to meet postal regulations and had long been considered the optimum program for such work, had fallen behind in its upgrading and was trying to catch up with changes in postal regulations just as Comrade Donna Bills began to teach it to herself. To make a long story a bit shorter, those problems have mostly been resolved with upgrades, and the in-house mailing list operation has been up and running for several months. That's okay as far as it goes, but it's important to understand that only Comrade Donna Bills knows how to maintain the list, and that she must attend to this besides all the other demands that are made on her at the office and as a working parent.

Fifth, I happened to run into our landlord, Mr. ..., last Friday. We are on friendly terms personally, and we struck up a conversation. Because of the direction that conversation took I felt it was a good opportunity to bring up the lease question. Frankly, I do not believe he knew that the expiration date is imminent. However, without going into detail, I made my concerns clear. He said he understood and that he would come up with a proposal within the next week or two. That was ice that needed breaking, and I am relieved to have that part of it behind me.

Sixth, with all of these problems and distractions to fret over, besides the financial problem...I find myself hesitating to make decisions. For example: we are completely out of leaflets. I am spending some of my time going over those I think have reprinting possibilities. At the same time, however, I hesitate to have leaflets printed in economical quantities when the possibility of shipping all of them to sections, members-at-large and the leaflet volunteers before the lease expires are virtually nil. The dilemma is the prospect of losing a year's worth of agitational work versus squandering funds that cannot be replaced—not now, at least, when I am calling on the membership and the readership to come up with \$50,000 just to keep a roof over the Party's head. Spring is here, and this is the time when the National Office should be encouraging leaflet distri-

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bution. If I fail to reach agreement with Mr. ..., however, it may become necessary to dispose of the remaining Labor News stock and any new supply of leaflets. Furthermore, commercial property in this area is extremely hard to come by. Even if we could afford the going rate, plus the moving expense, which we can't, finding new facilities would not be easy.

Seventh, many administrative, political and editorial problems do not receive the attention they need, partly because their number is so large and partly because the general situation is so uncertain. Now, of course, I must prepare a report for the National Convention, and I am concerned that it may not be as thorough as it should be. On top of that, this coming convention, with only 13 elected delegates, will be the smallest ever. Many of the 13 have been delegates in the past. Their devotion is beyond question, but...it has been years since a National Convention did even the minimum by "framing" a National Platform and drafting a few resolutions expressing SLP policy on what's going on in the country and the world. Indeed, no recent convention accomplished much of genuine political or organizational value. With so few delegates, this convention seems crippled from the start.

* * * * *

[Signed] Fraternally yours,
 ROBERT BILLS
 National Secretary

Incidentally, only one member of the NEC has replied to this letter to date. That reply was as follows:

4/7/97

Dear Comrade Bills:

This is to acknowledge receipt of NEC correspondence dated 2/10, 2/11, 2/20, 2/25, 2/27, 3/4, 3/5, 3/24, 3/27, 3/28, 3/31 and 4/2.

Your March 31 letter comprises a summary of National Headquarters and it shows that we are in serious trouble, including the effect on you.

Fraternally yours, etc.

My answer was somewhat more elaborate. It was written and mailed under date of April 18, and read, in part, as follows:

Dear Comrade...

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of April 7. Thank you.

To say the SLP is in serious trouble qualifies as the under-

statement of my month. The truth is that the SLP has been in serious trouble for several years. Three years ago we still had between \$400,000 and \$500,000, but knew, or should have known, that, barring some godsend or windfall, there was no realistic hope of ever replacing it. We had most of the present lease in front of us and most of our computer equipment was fairly new—and what wasn't we could (and did) replace.

Now we are down to \$185,000 (excluding the \$25,000 being held in escrow), [have] even less hope of any major infusion of new funds, and we are on the tail end of the lease.

It was the near certainty of this decline in financial resources (among other things) that I wanted to impress on the NEC in Session in April 1994, when we still had \$320,000 in cash, held nearly \$150,000 in escrow and were about to start on our current lease. That's what I wanted to get across to the 1995 National Convention, when we still had more than \$330,000 in cash, held \$25,000 in escrow, and had two full years on the current lease. I gave it another shot, at the NEC Session in March 1996. By then, however, we were already down to \$269,000 (excluding \$25,000 in escrow) and about to enter into the third and last year on the lease. Now we're scraping bottom, fore *and* aft, and all along the keel.

When you're down to \$185,000 and have to think about committing almost \$120,000 to a new three-year lease, it doesn't leave much room to maneuver. It leaves \$65,000 for three years' worth of payroll, taxes, printing and shipping costs, hospitalization, telephone, supplies, replacing worn-out equipment, etc. We spent over \$190,000 last year alone, and there's no more "fat" to trim. *The People* is already down to a monthly; the staff is woefully insufficient; there are no prospects for replacing anyone on the present staff, much less adding to it, and what staff there is cannot be described as entirely stable. Furthermore, there is no money for adding to the payroll, even if there were one or two possibilities for such additions; next to no fundraising activity is going on at the section level, and not much more is going on in the way of agitation. We added only nine new members last year, which wouldn't be worth mentioning here except that it was nine [eight] more than were added in 1995.

No, Comrade..., the SLP is not simply in trouble, or even "serious trouble." It is in more trouble than it has ever been. Even when the Party was on the verge of total bankruptcy, in 1914, it had people. That was something! There were about 2,000 members, and some federations. Today's SLP is one-tenth that size and heading in the wrong direction.

* * * * *

The dominant question on my mind for now is this: What will the coming convention do about all these...troubles we

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have?

* * * * *

[Signed] Fraternally yours,
 ROBERT BILLS
 National Secretary

*

The headquarters lease expires July 31, 1997, i.e., within three months from now. The monthly rent today is \$2,338.90. There has been no increase in the rent since we moved in almost three years ago, but a Consumer Price Index clause allowing for annual increases of up to six percent was written into the current lease. Accordingly, the annual cost to the Party for each of the past three years has been \$28,066.80, and the total cost over the past three years has been \$84,200.40.

The current monthly rent of \$2,338.90 breaks down to 95¢ a square foot. This is only an average, however, because the downstairs portion is “unimproved” storage space, for which we are charged less than for the upstairs office space.

The current lease is called a “full-service agreement,” meaning that utilities and services (electricity, garbage, janitorial, etc.) are included with the rent.

I have received the landlord’s proposed terms for any new lease that might be signed before the current one expires. Those terms are summarized in the following letter from the Murphy Square Building management:

April 30, 1997

Mr. Robert Bills
National Secretary
National Executive Committee of
the Socialist Labor Party
111 W. Evelyn Avenue, #209
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

Dear Mr. Bills:

Thank you for your interest in renewing your Lease with Murphy Square. On behalf of the ownership, I am pleased to respond as follows:

1. Premises: 111 W. Evelyn Avenue, Sunnyvale, ground floor suite #110 [113] consisting of approximately 879 square feet and second floor Suite #209 consisting of approximately

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1583 square feet.

2. Term: Three (3) years, commencing August 1, 1997 and ending July 31, 2000. Tenant will have the option to cancel occupancy on Suite #110 [113] only, consisting of approximately 879 square feet by giving sixty days prior written notice.

3. Rent: \$1.55 per square foot for Suite #209 (\$2,453.65) and \$1.00 per square foot for Suite #110 [113] (\$879.00) per month, full service. Rent shall increase each year by the percentage increase in the San Francisco/Oakland/San Jose Consumer Price Index, with a minimum of 3% and maximum of 6%.

4. Lessee's Share of Operating Expense Increase shall be 5% as defined in Paragraph 4.2 of Murphy Square's standard office lease.

Thank you again for your interest in renewing your lease with Murphy Square. While this letter is not intended to constitute a binding agreement, it is meant to outline general terms and conditions under which we would enter into a formal lease agreement. This proposal shall expire at 5:00 P.M., Friday, May 30, 1997.

Sincerely,
MURPHY SQUARE,
A California Limited Partnership

[Signed]

....
General Partner

On motion, this section of the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

At 11:30 a.m., a motion was adopted to recess for five minutes. Reconvened at 11:38 a.m.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Party Finances

By now, every member of the Party knows that the SLP is in financial hot water. How hot, how deep and how we got into those waters was summed up in the general letter of February 10 regarding the SLP Defense Fund and explaining the Party's financial condition as it stood then. What it will take to get us out of those troubling financial waters may not be as clear, however, since they are as muddy as they are hot and deep.

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The general letter of February 10 called attention to a front-page article from the January issue of *The People*, in which the SLP Defense Fund, and the \$50,000 goal the National Office had set for it, was announced. That issue went to press about the middle of December, and it undoubtedly reached most of the membership long before the general letter.

Introducing a major fund drive through *The People* is an unusual thing, and not what I would have preferred. Still, it could not have come as a complete surprise to the membership after having received the published proceedings of the 1996 NEC Session and the annual financial statement for the year ending December 31, 1995, which was mailed under date of November 5, 1996.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, I informed the NEC in Session in March 1996 that the Party's financial situation had not improved and that the cash reserves that remained then were "insufficient to see us through the current lease, which expires on July 31, 1997, unless expenses can be reduced and income enhanced by significant amounts." I added that even though "operating expenses had been reduced by about \$36,000 in 1995, compared to those for 1994, months in which routine expenses outrun receipts by margins of five-to-one, or more, are now commonplace."

Similarly, the financial statement mailed to the membership last November included a covering letter that called attention to the 1995 deficit of \$136,600, and added:

...Although the Party has run a deficit every year during the 1990s, last year was the first since 1992 that ended with a net loss. Each of the other three years (1991, 1993 and 1994) ended with surpluses despite the annual deficits recorded. In each of those three years the deficits (as reflected in the annual financial statements) were wiped out by bequests....

A table of figures was inserted to show how these deficits had been wiped out in the three years mentioned. However, it was followed by a brief statement cautioning that the report, while providing an accurate picture of what the Party's financial condition was on December 31, 1995, had no bearing on the financial situation as of November 5, 1996. As I went on to explain:

...Indeed, according to an unaudited report recently compiled by the business office, the Party's cash reserves as of October 31, 1996, were less than \$200,000. What this means is that the Party is on the verge of a major financial crisis that becomes all the more urgent when it is understood that the current headquarters lease expires on July 31, 1997, i.e., in less than nine months. To avert the crisis that threatens, a concerted effort to replenish the Party's cash reserves must be made before the 1997 National Convention....

In the meantime, however, I urge every member of the Party to contribute as generously to Party funds as their personal circumstances will allow, and every section to increase their fundraising efforts on the Party's behalf.

Not generally known to the membership, of course, is that the Party's deteriorating financial condition was a consideration in setting the date for this convention. A few days before mailing the financial statement, I wrote to the NEC and recommended that the 1997 National Convention be called to convene on May 2, 1997. That letter to the NEC was mailed under date of October 31, 1996, and read, in part, as follows:

My recommendation for when the convention should be held is made for two reasons:

First: The National Headquarters lease expires on July 31, 1997. Before then, however, a decision will be needed on whether to enter negotiations on a new lease on our present headquarters, relocate to new facilities, or make preparations for closing the headquarters down permanently. Accordingly, it is problematical whether the actual decision can be left to the convention. However, a convention held in early May would allow about three months to implement the decision finally made.

Second: A convention in early May would allow four months in which to conduct a major fundraising effort, the results of which could affect which of the three possible decisions mentioned above will be made. Indeed, it could take the decision out of our hands entirely. If the present pattern of monthly deficits continues through July 1997, cash reserves will be reduced to about \$93,000 by August 1, 1997. That amount might be sufficient to cover a new lease, but it would leave nothing over for salaries, insurance, taxes, printing, supplies, and all the other things required to operate the headquarters and publish *The People*. The Party's operating expense for the 1995 calendar year was about \$232,000, of which just over \$28,000—12 percent of the total—went toward rent.

It had been my hope to write to the membership immediately after the NEC vote on where and when the convention should be held, but for reasons that I explained to the NEC, that was not possible.

It was against this background that the SLP Defense Fund{ TC "SLP Defense Fund" \1 2 } was announced in *The People* before it could be announced directly to the membership. When writing the general letter of February 10, however, I tried to provide as much detail as I could so the membership would have a clear idea of what was at stake. For that reason, I reproduce it here in its entirety:

February 10, 1997

To the Sections and Members of the SLP

Dear Comrades:

SLP Defense Fund

A front-page column in the January issue of *The People* announced a \$50,000 SLP Defense Fund to be collected by the time the Party's 43rd National Convention convenes on Friday, May 2, 1997. A similar article appeared in the February issue, and the two were combined into a letter mailed to all readers of *The People*. As members of the SLP, however, you need and are entitled to a more detailed explanation of why the goal of \$50,000 was set, why so much emphasis has been placed on raising that amount by convention time, and what I expect that amount will accomplish for the SLP, assuming it is successfully raised.

Before getting to that, however, I must introduce you to some numbers, and before I introduce those numbers I want to add a note of caution.

Please do not jump to any conclusions. The financial situation is serious—very serious—but it need not be fatal. The SLP has been in binds like this before and it has always managed to survive them. The reason it survived similar problems of the past is that those problems were faced with the same calm determination that has enabled many small forces in history to overcome many formidable obstacles. That is precisely what the present situation requires of all of us, and if we measure up to that demand we can deal with the rest.

Now for those numbers I mentioned.

First: As of January 1, 1997, the SLP's cash reserves had dwindled to about \$193,500. I say dwindled because those same reserves stood at \$404,000 on January 1, 1995. In short, the Party's reserves have declined by \$210,500 over two years' time at a rate of about \$8,770 a month.

Second: This decline was not due to increased expenses but to declining income. The cumulative deficit over the same 24-month period came to \$210,400, which divided almost equally between each of those two years—\$104,300 for 1995 and \$106,100 for 1996. The total operating expense for the 1995–1996 period was about \$428,800, but only \$191,400 of that was spent in 1996. The Party's total income from all sources over the same period was about \$218,400, but only \$85,300 of that total was received in 1996. In other words, while the dollar decline in cash contributions and the dollar decline in expenditures approximated each other, the proportional decline of 36 percent in contributions was much greater than the 19 percent decline in expenditures. This is significant because no further decline in expenditures of any size is possible without suspending *The People*, and any further decline of income will lead to the same end.

Third: If monthly deficits continue to pile up at the same rate, the Party's cash reserves will be reduced to \$158,400 by May 1, and if that pattern continues through the end of the year, the deficit for 1997 will come to about \$105,200 and the Party's cash reserves will be reduced to about \$88,300. The significance of this is that the remaining reserves would be insufficient to cover any new lease on the headquarters. The present lease expires on July 31. I estimate that the total cost to the Party over the life of any new three-year lease on the same headquarters will be about \$106,500. If my estimate of what a new lease will cost is correct, and if all other annual expenses continue at about their present level over the three-year life of that lease, we can anticipate Party expenditures of about \$200,000 for each of those three years, or \$600,000 over the entire three-year period.

Before I proceed with this, allow me to put that \$600,000 figure into perspective. To do that I must put another set of figures before you. These figures have to do with the Party's sources of income.

One of those sources is interest on bank deposits. Income from this source was more than \$20,000 in 1994, but not surprisingly fell to less than \$14,000 in 1996.

Another larger source of income, of course, are the cash donations members and sympathizers make to SLP funds. Over the last five years, however, such contributions have declined by nearly 43 percent, i.e., from over \$88,700 received in 1992 to just over \$50,600 in 1996. A major factor in this decline undoubtedly has been the decline in the number of regularly scheduled fundraising social affairs held by sections.

A third major source of revenue, but one that by its nature is completely unpredictable, are bequests the Party from time-to-time receives from the estates of deceased members and

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sympathizers. This source of income to the Party, unpredictable though it is, has reduced or eliminated deficits that otherwise would have crippled the Party. Several examples were cited in the covering letter to the financial statement for 1995. However, a more graphic illustration of this can be seen by comparing the total amount realized from this source to the totals derived from funds and interest over the past five years (1992–1996), as follows:

Funds -----	\$330,332.49
Interest -----	\$103,794.98
Subtotal -----	\$434,127.47
Bequests -----	\$440,645.47
Total -----	\$874,772.94

While these figures on income do not take into account literature and *People* sales, dues payments, the annual mileage assessment, or several other relatively minor sources, they should be sufficient to demonstrate how much bequests and similar arrangements by Party members and friends have benefited the SLP. However, of the nearly \$441,000 derived from this source during the past five years, about \$411,000 was received between 1992 and 1994 and barely \$30,000 was received during the two years of 1995 and 1996. I do not know what accounts for the drop, but what these figures make clear is that without this source of support in the past the SLP would not have survived to face the financial predicament it is in today. It is a debt that can never be repaid except by buckling down to the task of ensuring that all these splendid gifts from many benefactors—gifts ranging in amounts from a few hundred dollars to several reaching into the tens of thousands—were not given in vain.

What all these numbers add up or boil down to is this:

The \$50,000 SLP Defense Fund the National Office has called for will not solve the Party's financial problems. However, if that amount is raised it would reduce the projected deficit for the first half of 1997 from the \$53,000 anticipated to about \$3,000, and thereby boost the Party's cash reserves up to about \$190,000, i.e., to about where they were on January 1. In other words, it would buy the Party time—another 12, or possibly 18 months—in which to come to grips with this increasingly debilitating problem of persistent financial deficits. It would allow for another year or so similar to the year just past, during which *The People* appeared every month, but in which it was necessary to suspend the advertising campaign needed to build up the subscription list and to place a virtual moratorium on printing new leaflets and the books and pamphlets needed to attract new membership to the SLP. However, the immediate problem is enough for the present. If we deal with it successfully we can then turn to take up the others.

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These, then, are the facts about the Party's finances and the SLP Defense Fund. The National Office will continue to promote the fund through *The People* and by mailings to the readership. The rest is up to you, the membership of the SLP. In that regard, I call upon every section of the Party to schedule at least one fundraising social affair for the benefit of the SLP Defense Fund, and individual members are called upon to voluntarily assess themselves some amount—such as a week's wages—for the same purpose.

Fraternally yours,
[Signed] ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

Since the general letter was written, the Party's books and records for the 1996 calendar year have been audited by certified public accountant R. Leonard Stickler, and a financial statement has been prepared for the membership. That statement will be mailed shortly after the convention. In the meantime, however, it is available to the convention.

Since January 1, 1997, or roughly since launching the SLP Defense Fund, things have developed about as expected. Monthly expenses, which averaged about \$16,000 month in 1996, have averaged about \$17,500 a month since this year began. Monthly income, which averaged about \$7,100 a month last year, has averaged about \$13,400 a month during the first four months of 1997, and the increase can be tied almost completely to the SLP Defense Fund. As a result, monthly deficits that averaged \$8,900 in 1996 have been cut to about \$4,300 a month since January 1, and bank balances that stood at about \$193,500 at the start of the year stood at about \$181,500 as of April 30.

Now that the SLP Defense Fund has run its course, and unless something unusual comes along that might affect the pattern, it seems probable that monthly deficits will resume their former rates and that the Party's cash reserves will continue to decline through the remainder of the 1997 calendar year. There is one outstanding estate at present that may affect the situation in a positive way. That is still uncertain, however, and even the most optimistic view of what it might mean for the Party does not include any major turnaround.

What can be done to reverse this debilitating decline in

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the Party's cash reserves and to reverse the trend? That is not an easy question to answer. However, as I wrote in a letter to NEC Member George Taylor last November:

Negotiating the terms of any new lease on this or some other headquarters for the next two or three years is a practical matter that can only be handled by the National Office, and in the past it was handled in a routine way. Much more is involved this time around, however. This time a decision must be made on whether the Party can expect to raise the funds that will be needed to continue its operations over the next two or three years. Operating expenses last year [1995] came to more than \$230,000, and if they stayed at that level for the next three years the total operating expense would be \$690,000.

The question is whether the SLP can reasonably expect to raise that kind of money over three years' time and in the annual increments that will be needed to see us through the year 2000. This becomes a question because of the low state of the membership. A burden that once was shared by 500, or 700 or 1,000 members would have to be born by the 190–200 we have today—plus...whatever added support we can expect from the contributions of nonmembers. By contributions, of course, I mean bequests besides daily receipts. Daily receipts have never kept pace with expenses; bequests have always made the difference.

There was always an element of chance involved when it came time to negotiate the headquarters lease....However, the gamble was never as large as it will have to be in our present circumstances.

Another factor to consider is the headquarters staffing problem. Comrade Nathan Karp is in his 80s and in less than perfect health. Comrade Gunderson, who is in her...70s, also has serious health problems. Heaven forbid that anything would happen to either of these indispensable members of the staff over the next three years, but obviously we cannot look forward to those three years in the same light we would if they were in their 40s or 50s.

Still, a decision must be made within the next five or six months. Regardless of who makes it, that decision will have to be an informed and sober one.

On motion, this section of the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

On motion, at 12:10 p.m. the convention recessed until 1:30 p.m.

AFTERNOON SESSION, FRIDAY, MAY 2, 1997

The convention was called to order at 1:33 p.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The Sergeant at Arms reported six visitors present.

The National Secretary proceeded to read the following section of his report:

State of Organization

Party Membership—The NEC accepted nine applications for membership in 1996 and denied one application made by an expelled former member. Three members died during the year, five were dropped, four resigned and 19 transfers were carried through. The net loss in membership was three.

Sections—The Party had 14 sections in 11 states on Jan. 1, 1996, three of which were below strength. The 14 sections held a total of 134 monthly business meetings during the year, at which attendance ranged from three to eight members. The sections and the number of business meetings held by each were as follows:

Los Angeles, Calif. (12); Sacramento, Calif. (2); San Francisco Bay Area, Calif. (12); St. Petersburg, Fla. (12); Cook Co., Ill. (11); Wayne Co., Mich. (12); Minneapolis, Minn. (12); New York City, N.Y. (2); Akron, Ohio (12); Cleveland, Ohio (10); Portland, Ore. (12); Philadelphia, Pa. (12); Seattle, Wash. (2); Milwaukee, Wis. (11).

Two sections were disbanded in 1996. The NEC concurred in Section Seattle's decision to disband on July 2, and it accepted Section Sacramento's decision on Aug. 6. Although neither section was below strength, the NEC approved their decisions to disband because the scattered state of their memberships and certain other considerations made it impossible for them to meet regularly and to function as sections.

With the exception of one member of former Section Sacramento, all members of the two disbanded sections transferred to the national organization. Several attempts to contact the Sacramento member who failed to complete his transfer were unsuccessful, and the NEC eventually dropped

him for nonpayment of dues.

Two sections reported net losses of one member each during the year, and four reported net gains of one or two. The gains reported resulted from transfers by newly admitted national members-at-large living within the jurisdictions of two of the sections that were below strength when the year began. The sections that benefited from these transfers were Section Minneapolis and Section New York City.

The third section that began the year with less than five members was Section St. Petersburg, Fla. The section held 12 regular business meetings in 1996, but age and health considerations affecting three of its four members made it extremely difficult for them to carry on. Three of the members tried to continue after the fourth (who happened to be the organizer) suddenly left town "temporarily." The section finally voted to disband and the NEC approved its decision on Feb. 3, 1997. The three members who held out as long as they could transferred to the national organization. National Office efforts to contact the former organizer have failed, however, and soon it will be necessary for the NEC to drop him from membership.

At present, there are 11 sections in nine states, all of which are at or above minimum strength. It would be difficult to point to any two sections that represent the strongest and weakest links in the SLP chain of local organizations. All are small and all face serious problems. At the same time, all are composed primarily of dedicated and determined SLP men and women, many of whom are active well over and well beyond the call of duty.

Sections with able-bodied members who do not participate in Party activities or attend section meetings still exist, of course, as do sections with members whose health and circumstances prevent them from taking an active part in the Party's work. In short, the number of members enrolled in a section rarely provides an accurate picture of that section's strengths or of its weaknesses.

Every section has problems when it comes to filling all the offices and committees needed to conduct the Party's business with full efficiency. One indication of how difficult it has become for some of the sections to function properly is that three—Los Angeles, New York City and Wayne

Co.—are not represented at this convention. Another is that only five sections submitted names of members for this convention to consider when electing an NEC for the 1997–1999 term of office. However, most sections continue to be prompt and conscientious about keeping the National Office informed on their activities, submitting monthly and annual reports, and reporting changes in officers, the makeup of their committees or the composition of their memberships.

A major concern for any National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party, of course, is to consider and adopt measures that will assist in building up the sections of the Party through the addition of new membership. Only new additions to the membership will reduce the problems most sections face today and enable them to reach out to larger numbers of workers in the cities and metropolitan areas where they are centered. Hopefully, this convention will devote a major share of its time to this question and provide the needed guidance.

National Members-at-Large—The Party has members-at-large in 30 states. One who usually lives on Guam is temporarily living in England. It also seems that a second member-at-large who usually lives in Texas has gone to Brazil in search of work, but this has not been confirmed.

Numerically, it now appears that national members-at-large constitute half, or slightly more than half, of the total membership. It is difficult to be precise about this because a few members-at-large are not able to communicate with the National Office themselves, and there are a few instances where the National Office cannot even determine if a member is still living.

Instances of hostile families or indifferent institutions ignoring National Office inquiries about a member's health and well-being have become more frequent. The postal service will occasionally return a piece of Party mail or copy of *The People* bearing the one-word message "deceased" or "unknown." In addition, the National Office sometimes receives anonymous letters curtly announcing that so-and-so is incapacitated in some way or has died. Sometimes, National Office efforts to get more information about these members are ignored or answered in the same curt and

anonymous fashion.

The unit of SLP organization is the section and not the individual member, of course, and the Party's construction reflects this principle. This is as it should be, and building up the existing sections remains at the top of the Party's list of priorities.

However, the preponderance of all new members admitted to membership during the 1990s—73 percent of the total—were admitted as national members-at-large, and there is nothing at present to suggest that sections will again overtake the NEC in admitting new members anytime soon.

Furthermore, the most important resource the Party has at its disposal for organizing new sections in cities where none exist are its national members-at-large, and much depends on how well the Party succeeds in mobilizing and directing their activities on the Party's behalf. At present, however, there is no constitutional or other mechanism in place for welding these widely scattered and often isolated members into a coherent, well-disciplined and highly motivated body that could be set into motion along some specified path or in some specific direction; and it is admittedly difficult to conceive of one. Yet, that seems to be something the Party must develop if this group of loosely connected individual members that now constitute one-half of the Party's numerical strength is to be effectively integrated into the organization and mobilized in the Party's service.

As it stands now, however, the contribution national members-at-large make to the Party's work continues to lag far behind that of the sections. Only a few members-at-large routinely inform the National Office of their monthly activities, while others report only once or twice a year. Many, perhaps a majority, are rarely heard from at all, except when paying their dues and assessments or when responding to delinquency notices.

This is not a problem that will be easy to solve, or one that the Party can afford to ignore, and it certainly is not one that the at-large membership itself can be expected to solve without guidance and support from the national organization. Besides the constitutional ambiguity and the lack of means to motivate national members-at-large to consistent activity, the Party lacks the means to develop and guide

their socialist education as SLP men and women, or even to respond to those who occasionally take the initiative by writing to the National Office to overcome feelings of isolation, to raise theoretical questions or to seek the Party's guidance.

The National Office should be able to respond to these needs, and it should be able to take initiatives that would address these problems. Indeed, it must be able to do these things, or else the Party risks squandering all the potential this half of the membership may hold. Given the present size of the headquarters staff, however, and with the heavy demands already being placed upon such a small staff, the National Office is acting under a severe handicap when it tries to perform these important duties.

Canada—In February, I wrote to the National Secretary of the SLP of Canada, Comrade Doug Irving, to express regret that it was beyond the Party's means to invite our sister organization to send a fraternal delegate to this convention. However, I did suggest that a report on SLP of Canada activities and accomplishments over the past two years would be of interest to our membership. Comrade Irving replied under date of March 8 with the following:

Dear Comrade Bills:

Thank you for your letter of Feb. 20. These are trying times for all, and the SLP is no exception. As to your request for a report on the activities of the Canadian Party over the past two years, the following information hopefully will answer your request.

This report covers the two-year period from Jan. 1, 1995, through Dec. 31, 1996.

During 1995, there was a total of 19,300 copies of *The People*, with a leaflet inserted in each, distributed in Burnaby, B.C. One hundred sixty-one copies of *The People* were sold in two stores. Two copies of each printing of *The People* were placed in the reading room of a local library. Comrade [James] Minal wrote 70 letters and sent them to the capitalist press. Some were printed, often after omitting "Socialist Labor Party" from them. Comrade [John] Fedoruk wrote one letter to the press that was published.

During 1996, there was a total of 11,100 copies of *The People*, with a leaflet inserted in each, distributed in Burnaby, B.C. One hundred fourteen copies were sold in two stores. Comrade Minal wrote 44 letters and sent them to the capitalist press for publishing. Some were printed, usually without men-

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tioning the Party's name.

The Party keeps an office in Ottawa to maintain a national presence. All contributions from Party members and sympathizers are directed to the National Headquarters and deposited to a bank account in the Party's name. These funds are used to run our day-to-day operations. When and if a surplus occurs, said surplus is invested in safe securities until needed.

A copy of our 1996 financial statement is enclosed for your information and that of your NEC.

The Party has suffered the loss of three members by death over the last three years....These three stalwart members represented over 150 years of Party support and activity. They will be sorely missed by the Socialist Movement.

We presently have eight members in the Party: One in Chomeday, Laval, Quebec; three in Ottawa, Ont.; one in Ome-mee, Ont.; and three in Burnaby, B.C. Membership ages range from 54 years to 84 years. No new members have been attracted for many years, nor are there any signs of working-class interest in the social conditions that confront them today. Our only hope is to continue to agitate for change by presenting our program to them and hoping that sometime soon the sleeping giant (the working class) will awaken and establish the Socialist Industrial Republic of Labor.

On behalf of all members of the Socialist Labor Party of Canada, I extend greetings to all members of our sister organization in the United States of America, and wish you a very successful and meaningful 43rd National Convention.

With best wishes,

Fraternally yours,
[Signed] DOUG IRVING
National Secretary

Tributes to the three Canadian members who died appeared in the *SLP Newsletter*, which we send to the National Office in Ottawa for distribution to the Canadian membership. Copies of the financial statement that Comrade Irving attached to his report are available for the convention.

Membership Changes (1996)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>Admit</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Drop</u>	<u>Resign</u>	<u>Expel</u>	<u>Transfers</u>		<u>Net</u>
						<u>In</u>	<u>Out</u>	
1. Los Angeles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Sacramento*	0	0	0	0	0	0	-8	-8
3. S.F. Bay Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. St. Petersburg	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
5. Cook Co.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Wayne Co.	0	0	1	0	0	0	-1	-1
7. Minneapolis	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	+1
8. New York City	0	0	0	0	0	+2	0	+2
9. Akron	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Cleveland	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	+1
11. Portland	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-1
12. Philadelphia	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	+1
13. Seattle*	0	0	0	0	0	0	-6	-6
14. Milwaukee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtotals	0	1	2	1	0	+5	-15	-14
15. Mbrs-at-Large	9	2	3	3	0	+14	-4	+11
Totals	9	3	5	4	0	+19	-19	-3

On motion, this section of the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

General Activities

Campaign for Socialism—Last year, being a national election campaign year, the 42nd National Convention resolved that the SLP would devote its energies to a 1996 Campaign for Socialism. The campaign the convention planned for was to be an organized one patterned after the 1992 Campaign for Socialism.

Most delegates to this convention will remember that one reason for the 1992 Campaign for Socialism was a serious decline in Party activities that had occurred over a period of

* Disbanded.

several years. One of the main purposes of the campaign was to stimulate the membership to increase their Party activity in the expectation that their efforts would produce results. If successful, the expectation was that the higher level of activity for 1992 would carry over into 1993 and beyond.

The same delegates who remember all of that may also remember how the 1992 Campaign for Socialism was summed up in my report to the 41st National Convention in 1993. I have included the following excerpt from that summary in this report for whatever assistance it might offer to this convention when it assesses last year's campaign effort and makes its plans for the Party's agitation over the coming two years:

1992 Campaign for Socialism

The 1992 Campaign for Socialism was a success. Getting it started was something like trying to get a teenager out of bed a little too early in the day to suit his fancy. But, once we got the SLP going, it did just fine.

However, the 1992 Campaign for Socialism was not the 1932, or the 1952, or even the 1972 national campaign—and members who allow themselves to fall into the trap of making the comparison are doing themselves, and the Party, a disservice. For, in spite of the illustration used to open the door on this subject, the SLP is not made up *entirely* of blushing young faces with the gleam of *innocent* enthusiasm still sparkling in their eyes. A large percentage of the membership—and I'm not betraying any secret here—are seasoned veterans of the movement. I say a large percentage, and not a majority, because that is the fact. Unfortunately, however, many of the younger members, and many national members-at-large of all ages, did not participate as much as they should have, and the 1992 Campaign for Socialism suffered for it. Much more could have been accomplished had more of the younger members and members-at-large roused themselves to get involved—and that's a shame.

So as not to be misunderstood, however, it should be added that the Party also has younger members and members-at-large who are as devoted and clear in their understanding of what's at stake as do the seasoned veterans and those who have the advantage of belonging to a section. Some are active, and where they are they often do good work. Too many are not active, however, and while this is not a new problem, it is one that will eventually have to be dealt with if we are to build on the momentum we succeeded in building up during the campaign.

The 1992 Campaign for Socialism was a successful undertaking for the SLP because we accomplished most of what we set out to accomplish. We set specific goals for the National Office, *The People* and the membership—and we achieved most of them. We did not set what we knew would be unattainable goals, because we knew that failure would only dampen our spirits and compound our problems. However, neither did we set goals that were below our potential, that wouldn't require an effort, or would be greeted with “ho-hum” derision. Had we done that there would have been no risk of failure, and without that element of risk there would be no chance to reap the reward of a success that had to be striven for and, if successfully striven for, yield the greater dividend we were after—a Party-wide sense of accomplishment; a building of our confidence; a lasting enthusiasm to propel us on after the campaign was over and done with. We set what we believed were realistic goals, worthy of our potential, yet tempered by the realization that there was some stiffness in the Party's joints and some cotton in its mind. We needed to stretch those muscles and exercise that mind to prove to ourselves that we still know how to do things and how to do them right. And we did.

When the 42nd National Convention set the goals it wanted the membership to strive for during the 1996 presidential election campaign it undoubtedly had these considerations, and others besides, in mind. What those goals were, and how the effort was to be organized and conducted, was summed up in my report to the 1996 NEC Session, as follows:

1996 Campaign for Socialism

The 42nd National Convention adopted a report calling for a 1996 Campaign for Socialism. The convention said that its call for such a campaign was based on conclusions drawn from interviews with “the delegates to ascertain the sections' and members'-at-large strengths and weaknesses....”

From those interviews, the convention concluded that the SLP has “the resources...to conduct a ‘Campaign for Socialism 1996,’ similar to the one conducted in campaign year 1992.” As guidance for planning and conducting the campaign, the convention also allotted certain tasks to the delegates, the national members-at-large, the sections, the National Office and the NEC.

The delegates, for example, were to “return to their sections to ask each member to assess their abilities and fitness to volunteer their services to work at the National Headquarters.”

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For their part, national members-at-large were to “increase *The People* and leaflet distribution and related activities by...15 p e r c e n t , ” “ t a k e . . . s t e p s . . . to lay the foundations to ultimately build sections in their area,” and “set an example to sympathizers and inspire them to seek Party membership.”

The instructions to sections were more elaborate.

First, sections were “to take stock of themselves and realistically evaluate their abilities and manpower [sic] availability relating to the Party’s agitational efforts.”

Second, sections were to “make realistic plans and [set] achievable goals.”

Third, section planning was to “start immediately...and utilize month-to-month planning for the entire year.”

Fourth, section planning was to provide for “leaflet distribution, *The People* distribution, lecture series, discussion groups, study classes and...innovative agitational activities....”

Fifth, sections were to keep the National Office “regularly informed of such plans....”

Sixth, as with national members-at-large, sections were to “set an example to sympathizers and inspire them to seek Party membership.”

Seventh, sections were also “called upon to actively contact all sympathizers in their ‘contact files’ in an attempt to recruit them to become active Party members.”

The convention also allocated certain assignments to the National Office.

First, the National Office was called upon “to coordinate this campaign....”

Second, the National Office is “to develop leaflets and other agitational materials as needed.”

Third, the National Office is to “assist the sections as necessary.”

Fourth, the National Office is to “take advantage of this opportunity to recruit...individuals through an active campaign of letters, membership information packets, etc.”

Fifth, the National Office is to print “issues of *The People* [that] contain articles utilizing this [campaign] theme with the last three issues available prior to the November 1996 elections supporting this campaign.”

The task of adopting “a title or slogan”—the campaign “theme” referred to—was assigned to the NEC.

These, then, are the convention’s instructions for a 1996 Campaign for Socialism.

Since the convention was held last July, a few organizers have written to report that no members from their sections are available for employment at the National Office. No section has reported on plans being made for the campaign, and the Na-

tional Office has not been free to make many inquiries.

However, the NEC is not without guidance on the Party's overall capacity to carry out the convention's instructions. Sections of this report offer some of that guidance, and together with the "Reports on Discussions of [the] 42nd National Convention" published in the Winter 1996 issue of the *SLP Newsletter*, the information available should be sufficient for NEC purposes.

Whether the 1996 Campaign for Socialism lived up to expectations is something this convention will evaluate and decide. In certain respects it unquestionably stimulated the membership to step up the Party's agitation. For example, sections reported a 39 percent increase in their distribution of SLP leaflets in 1996 compared to 1995. That increase outstripped the 10 percent increase they reported in 1992 by a wide margin. However, the total distribution in 1996 was only half that reported for 1992.

One factor that had an adverse effect on the 1996 Campaign for Socialism was that the National Office could not perform all the tasks that the 1995 National Convention assigned to it. Only one general letter went out during the campaign, for example, and only one leaflet (*Getting Something for Nothing*) was written and printed with the campaign specifically in mind. Most serious of all, however, was having to cut back on *The People* just when the campaign was about to get under way.

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Leaflets—The National Office shipped 161,057 leaflets to sections, national members-at-large and SLP sympathizers in 1996, compared to the 118,355 leaflets shipped in 1995.

Sections ordered 87,000 leaflets last year, compared to 39,285 the year before. National members-at-large also increased their orders, from 8,475 in 1995, to 21,183 in 1996. The National Office also shipped 30,649 leaflets to nonmembers during the year, compared to the 44,280 that sympathizers ordered in 1995.

Additional shipments of 22,225 leaflets went to SLP leafleting volunteers. As of Dec. 31, 1996, the volunteers numbered 20, half of whom are nonmembers. In 1995, SLP leaf-

leting volunteers received 26,315 leaflets for distribution.

The National Office cannot be sure about the total distribution of leaflets because only SLP sections and national members-at-large can be expected to report on a regular basis. Last year, sections reported a distribution of 106,257 leaflets, and an additional distribution of 7,878 leaflets was reported by 15 national members-at-large. Accordingly, the total distribution by sections and members reported for 1996 was 114,135. The reported distribution in 1995 was 73,632.

The largest distribution reported by a section in 1996 was 21,347 by Section San Francisco Bay Area. Section Philadelphia came in second with 17,912, followed by Section Minneapolis' reported distribution of 15,010. No other section reported distributing as many as 10,000 leaflets, though Section Cook Co. came close with 9,350.

Among national members-at-large, Comrade Joseph Frank of New York State came in first with a distribution of 1,769. He was followed by Comrade Clayton Hewitt of Connecticut (1,500), Comrade Stephen Raper of Tennessee (1,465) and Comrade Daniel Deneff of California (1,360).

Six sections and one national member-at-large reported setting leaflet distribution goals for the 1996 Campaign for Socialism. The sections were Los Angeles (1,000), San Francisco Bay Area (10,000), Minneapolis (5,000), Akron (1,000), Portland (1,000) and Philadelphia (13,000). Of those that set a goal for the campaign, three surpassed the goals they had set. The three sections were San Francisco Bay Area (12,525), Minneapolis (8,000) and Portland (1,490). No report was received from the member-at-large.

The distribution reported by sections and members in 1992 was 212,333.

The People—SLP sections reported a distribution of 35,853 copies of *The People* last year, which was below the reported distribution of 57,113 copies in 1995.

Section Milwaukee reported the largest distribution, but it nudged out Section Minneapolis by a mere 53 copies. Section Milwaukee reported a distribution of 6,978 copies, compared to 6,925 copies reported by Section Minneapolis.

Following the leaders were Section Cleveland, with a reported distribution of 4,998 copies, Section San Francisco

Bay Area (3,579), Section Cook Co. (3,005) and Section St. Petersburg (2,080).

National members-at-large reported a distribution of 2,348 copies during the campaign year. Comrade Ben Kraft of New York State led with 500. Following just behind was Comrade Earl Shimp of New Jersey (420) and Comrade Clayton Hewitt of Connecticut (400). The total distribution for national members-at-large in 1995 was 3,585 copies.

Accordingly, the total distribution that sections and members reported to the National Office in 1996 was 38,201. The distribution reported in 1992 was 94,206 copies.

Public Meetings { TC "Public Meetings" \1 2 }—Sections and national members-at-large reported holding a total of 84 public meetings in 1995. That total included 26 fundraisers, eight lectures, four study class sessions and 46 discussion meetings.

The number of public meetings held last year was 94, including 25 fundraisers, six lectures and 61 discussion meetings. The number in 1992 was 168, which included 42 fundraisers, 45 lectures, 47 study class sessions and 34 discussion meetings.

Contacts—The National Office received 216 contacts from all sources in 1996, compared to 268 in 1995. Seventy-six of the 1996 contacts were from leaflets, or about one contact in return for 1,500 leaflets distributed by the sections and members-at-large. Without reports on the additional distribution by nonmembers it is impossible to estimate what the actual return off leaflet distribution was. What is known, however, is 47 of the 76 leaflet contacts took out subscriptions to *The People*.

Fifty-three contacts received in 1996 came from coupons printed in *The People*, or about one contact in return for 750 copies distributed. Here, too, the actual return is virtually impossible to determine because of the difference between the free distribution reported by sections and members (38,201 copies) and the total number shipped in bundles (98,104 copies) during the calendar year. Basing an estimate on the larger number, the National Office averaged one contact for 1,850 copies of *The People* shipped in bundles last year.

The number of contacts received in 1992 was 628.

Newsstands—The number of self-serve newsstands in operation declined from 61 on Jan. 1, to 51 on Dec. 31, 1996. A similar decline was reported in 1995, when eight of the 69 self-serve newsstands in operation at the beginning of the year were removed from the streets before the end of the year.

Last year, however, there was a modest increase in the number of commercial outlets that carried *The People*. The paper was on display at 15 when the year began, and at 19 when the year ended. Eleven commercial outlets for *The People* were reported for 1995, and there were 10 at the end of 1994.

Radio and TV—During the year, a national member-at-large co-hosted a number of televised broadcasts over a public access station in his area. At my request, he sent a video recording of the program to the National Office. Unfortunately, I have not found the time to review the tape and to respond with any suggestions, criticism or guidance.

I do not know the number of broadcasts the comrade participated in, but a letter he wrote to the National Office said he does the show “twice per month.”

I am concerned about this activity, not only because I have not found time to review the tape, but mostly because I cannot report with complete confidence that the broadcasts are consistent with the Party’s interests or conform to the applicable provisions of its “Norms and Procedures.”

I am confident that this isolated national member-at-large does the best that he can, and that he has no wish to risk doing the Party a disservice. However, my concern was heightened when I learned that the program was called “Social Democratic Review.” I say “was” because the name was changed to “Socialist Review.”

Apparently, the two other co-hosts are social democrats who have no SLP ties or obligations, though at least one of the two may be affiliated with an organization that has socialist pretensions. When the program was started it was billed as an activity of that other organization.

Before sending the video recording to the National Office, the comrade made it available to another national member-

at-large for “opinion and feedback.” The comments he received in return were technical points having to do with production, etc., rather than with the political content of the program.

The videotape is available to the convention, and it should be reviewed by an appropriate committee. It should be reviewed for what the Party can learn from it, and for what the comrade might learn from the Party.

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Under this heading it can also be reported that I received two radio interviews during the year. The first was a 30-minute broadcast over KVMR-FM, a small PBS station in the northern California town of Nevada City, last Labor Day. The second was over KPFT-FM, which is the Pacifica Radio Network’s outlet in Houston, Texas. That broadcast was on Wednesday, November 13, 1996, and had been arranged for by a reader of *The People* who is not a member of the SLP. Unfortunately, there is no way to assess these two broadcasts because the two stations have ignored National Office requests for audiocassette recordings. No contacts that could be traced to the interviews were received.

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Leaflet Distribution (1995–1996)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	770	3,095*	3,865
Sacramento, Calif.	10,015	4,630	14,645
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	5,035	21,349	26,384
St. Petersburg, Fla.	755	2,500	3,255
Cook Co., Ill.	6,580	9,350	15,930
Wayne Co., Mich.	1,151	7,181	8,332
Minneapolis, Minn.	0	15,010	15,010
New York City	0	750	750
Akron, Ohio	950	1,800	2,750
Cleveland, Ohio	7,437	6,599	14,036
Portland, Ore.	390	1,821	2,211
Philadelphia, Pa.	16,250	17,912	34,162
Seattle, Wash.	0	0	0
Milwaukee, Wis.	7,419	6,382	13,801
<u>Members-at-Large</u>	<u>8,440</u>	<u>7,878</u>	<u>16,318</u>
Totals	65,192	106,257	171,449

* Incomplete

Distribution of *The People* (1995–1996)

<u>Sections</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Los Angeles, Calif.	687	430*	1,117
Sacramento, Calif.	339	112	451
S.F. Bay Area, Calif.	5,694	3,579	9,273
St. Petersburg, Fla.	2,300	2,080	4,380
Cook Co., Ill.	1,450	3,005	4,455
Wayne Co., Mich.	500	1,000	1,500
Minneapolis, Minn.	14,935	6,925	21,860
New York City	N/A	0	0
Akron, Ohio	5,409	1,600	7,009
Cleveland, Ohio	8,166	4,998	13,164
Portland, Ore.	1,285	1,095	2,380
Philadelphia, Pa.	2,372	1,553	3,925
Seattle, Wash.	1,300	150	1,450
Milwaukee, Wis.	9,091	6,978	16,069
<u>Members-at-Large</u>	<u>3,585</u>	<u>2,348</u>	<u>5,933</u>
Totals	57,113	35,853	92,966

* Incomplete

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1996

Sections	Fundraisers	Public/School Lectures	Study Classes	Disc. Groups
Los Angeles		0	0	0
Sacramento	0	0	0	0
SF Bay Area	6	1	0	8
St. Petersburg	0	0	0	4
Cook Co.	0	0	0	0
Wayne Co.	2	0	0	0
Minneapolis	0	3	0	6
Mpls/Duluth SLP Group	3	0	0	0
New York City	0	0	0	0
Akron	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	0	15
Akron/Cleveland	8	1	0	2
Portland	1	0	0	11
Philadelphia	4	0	0	4
Seattle	0	0	0	0
Milwaukee	0	0	0	5
Mbrs-at-Large (Ohio)	0	1	0	6
TOTALS	25	6	0	61

Additional:

Section Cook Co. held three membership study classes.

The Duluth SLP Group and a member from Section Minneapolis participated in a local May Day rally.

Section Cleveland set up literature tables at two street festivals.

Section Portland maintained a literature table each weekend at a local Saturday Market from May through September.

Section Milwaukee held four membership study classes.

One national member-at-large participated in 12 local TV programs.

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Contacts

<u>Sources</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Leaflets	91	76	167
Miscellaneous	69	69	138
C o u p o n s			f r o m
<i>The People</i>	56	53	109
A d s	i n		O t h e r
Publications	7	12	19
R e q u e s t s			f o r
Campaign Literature	0	0	0
Local Fliers	1	0	1
Students/Teachers	44	6	50
S i g n - u p	S h e e t s		(F r o m
SLP Literature Tables)	0	0	0
Radio/TV	0	0	0
N . O .	M a i l i n g		t o
<u>Contacts & Former Subs</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTALS	268	216	484

Subscriptions From Contacts

	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Four months	64	44	108
Six months	0	11	11
One Year	16	19	35
Two Years	1	0	1
Three Years	1	6	7
<u>Bundle Subs</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
TOTALS	82	80	162
S u b s			f r o m
Leaflet Coupons	62	47	109
L e a f l e t	O r d e r s		f r o m
Leaflet Coupons	2	9	11

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On motion, this section of the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

At 2:18 p.m. the convention recessed for five minutes. Re-convened at 2:25 p.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

Party Press and Literature

The People—Seventeen issues (including 11 semi-monthly and six monthly issues) were published during the 1995–1996 fiscal year.¹ The average printing for each was 10,447 copies, of which 7,354 were mailed or shipped in bundles and 2,505 were mailed to subscribers. Accordingly, paid circulation during the 1995–1996 fiscal year averaged 9,859 copies per issue.

Special issues, and the total press run for each, included the 1995 Youth issue (14,100), the 1995 De Leon issue (12,000), the 1996 Paris Commune issue (12,100), and the 1996 Labor Day issue (14,600). The last named doubled as the first of three election campaign issues printed in 1996 and was the only issue printed with 12 pages during the 1995–1996 fiscal year.

The People began its 106th year of publication, and its first as a monthly, in April 1996. Fourteen issues (which includes six from the 1995–1996 reporting period) have been published since then. Six of the 14 contained extra pages, and five from that number were printed as special issues. Excluding the campaign issue of September 1996 already mentioned, the four other special issues, and the press runs for each, were the October, or second 1996 campaign issue (12,000); the November, or third campaign issue (13,700); the 1997 Paris Commune and Women’s Day issue (11,300); and the 1997 May Day issue (12,900). The sixth 12-page issue was printed in January 1997.

The classified ads placed with three magazines in Sep-

¹The fiscal year covered by the mandatory annual Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30 of the following year. *The People* publishes its annual statement in the November issue.

tember 1995 were not renewed when they expired last August. That decision was reached, in part, because of the disappointing return in comparison to our earlier experiences. A thorough review of the ads and where they were placed will be made before any similar campaign begins.

The subscription department processed 566 new subscriptions in 1996. About half of those subscriptions were four-month trial subscriptions. The others were for one year (176), six months (89), three years (11), or two years (6). Eighty-five additional subscriptions came from former readers who failed to renew when their earlier subscriptions expired. Accordingly, 651 names—new and what we call “old-new”—were added to the subscription list in 1996.

The sources for all 651 subscriptions added during the year were: Gifts (251), classified ads (81), free trials (78), National Office contacts (67), *The People's* subscription coupon (47), sections and members-at-large (38), and the usual assortment of miscellaneous sources (89). As can be seen, at least one-half of all incoming subscriptions processed last year came from someone other than the person whose name went onto the subscription list.

The People is mailed to readers and libraries in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and internationally to 13 countries¹ on five continents. The press run for April was 9,600 copies, distributed as follows:

Domestic Subscriptions	———	2,186
Foreign Subscriptions	———	54
Canadian Subscriptions	———	33
Domestic Bundles	—————	6,315
Foreign Bundles	—————	421
Regular Allowance	—————	591

Accordingly, paid circulation for the April issue was 9,009. One hundred fifty-one bundles of that issue were mailed or shipped to sections, members-at-large and nonmembers. Five of those went to SLP members in Canada and to nonmembers in other countries, and three went to librar-

¹Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Great Britain, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway.

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ies in the United States. These are the regular bundles that go out with every issue, and 22 of them were destined for commercial outlets. The largest number of regular bundle shipments goes to Section San Francisco Bay Area, which receives 10 that total up to 2,085 copies.

Included among the 2,273 subscribers are 427 libraries in the United States, one in Canada and 14 in other countries. Not included, however, are 75 current e-mail subscribers.

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In my report to the NEC Session last year, I showed that the annual paid circulation for *The People* has slipped badly as we moved from weekly, to biweekly, to semimonthly, and now to monthly publication. During 1978, for example, 50 weekly issues were printed and nearly 420,000 copies were put into circulation. Two years later, 26 issues went to press and almost 340,000 copies were sent to readers and distributors. Two years ago, the only full year of semimonthly publication, about 225,500 SLP newspapers went into circulation, and last year about 138,500 copies were mailed and shipped. In short, in 1996 *The People* printed one-third as often and circulated only one-third as much as it did in 1978.

As frequency and circulation have declined, so has the subscription list. Last year, I reported to the NEC that *The People's* subscription list was "smaller than at any time on record," and that I could not say if the decline had "bottomed out." The NEC Session convened on March 23, 1996, and as I informed the committee:

The press run for the issue of March 23, 1996, the most recent issue, was 9,800, which was distributed as follows:

Domestic Subs-----	2,396
Foreign Subs -----	90
Domestic Bundles-----	6,324
Foreign Bundles -----	431
Paid Circulation -----	9,241
Regular Allowance-----	559
Total-----	9,800

As can be seen, 2,486 subscription copies of that particular issue were mailed, compared to the 2,273 copies reported here for the April 1997 issue.

One reason for the continuing decline is the decline in the

number of subscriptions being received—651 last year, compared to nearly 1,000 in 1995, well over 900 in 1993, and more than 1,300 in 1992 and 1991.

Another is that it has always been difficult to hang on to subscriptions after they are received. Last year, more than 850 names were removed from the list. More than 1,200 were removed in 1995, and the same can be said for 1993 and 1992. Just over 1,100 subscriptions expired without being renewed in 1991.

There is nothing new about this. The same pattern can be traced back through the years to the very beginning of the records that have been preserved. It held true even in many of the years where *The People* experienced net gains in readership. In 1983, for example, the issue of January 8 went to press with a subscription list of 3,098 names. During the year, more than 1,800 names were added and more than 1,000 were removed. When the issue of December 24 was mailed it went to 3,743 subscribers. The net gain for the year was 645. Net gains of that size were made possible by the larger number of subscriptions processed in any given year.

Naturally, net losses in readership, such as those experienced in recent years, will be reflected in the subscription renewal rate. The renewal rates for each of the last five years were 47.8 percent in 1992, 48 percent in 1993, 41.3 percent in 1994, 37.8 percent in 1995 and 50.4 percent in 1996.

Last year's renewal rate of 50.4 percent may be a sign of better things to come for *The People* and the SLP. The last year for which the renewal rate topped 50 percent was 1990, and since then there have been only seven months for which it went over 60 percent. Four of those six have occurred since July 1996, and between November 1996 and January 1997, the three most recent months for which complete figures can be compiled, the renewal rate has shown marked improvement—67.6 percent last November, 62.9 percent last December, and 63.5 percent in January 1997. The highest renewal rate for a single month, at least since we began to keep systematic track of it in 1988, was 62.4 percent in September 1993, and in all that time there never were two consecutive months when the rate topped the 60 percent mark.

Whether these improving renewal rates are a sign of bet-

ter things to come, only a passing phase, or simply show that *The People* is being boiled down to its core of faithful supporters, is difficult to tell. However, there is nothing ambiguous about the message that comes attached to the steady decline in circulation and readership. That message is clear, and it is one that deserves careful consideration by this convention.

Leaflets—Four new leaflets, and one that was new in 1995, were printed or reprinted in quantities of 25,000 apiece, but that was before the NEC Session in March of 1996. No leaflets were printed during the rest of the year, but several have been reprinted this year, as follows:

<i>Here Today and Gone Tomorrow: The Plight of America's Temporary Workers</i>	10,000
<i>OUT OF WORK! How Safe Is YOUR Job?</i>	10,000
<i>Politicians Promise and Things Get Worse... WHY?</i>	10,000
<i>The Socialist Program: What It Is and How It Developed (large format)</i>	2,000
<i>What Is Socialism? What are the Facts? What are the Distortions? Here's What the Socialist Labor Party Says.</i>	20,000
<i>Who Are the Polluters? How Capitalism Is Destroying the Earth!</i>	10,000
Total	62,000

Books and Pamphlets—Not much that is new can be reported under this heading, but there are some important things to consider.

There were no new SLP books, pamphlets or *Socialist Studies* booklets published in 1996, no new ones are in the offing, and the list of incomplete printing projects continues to grow.

Something to consider when contemplating the SLP's needs for new editions of its basic pamphlets, and for modern pamphlets on the Party's program, etc., is the Party's ability to move that literature out of the New York Labor News and into circulation.

The job of moving the Party's literature from the Labor

News to its ultimate destination is primarily an administrative problem. It is a practical, nuts-and-bolts problem for the National Office to deal with, as distinct from an executive or legislative problem for the NEC or a National Convention to worry over. However, it is a problem that has taken on new dimensions in the 1990s.

When the current edition of *Socialist Landmarks* was reprinted in 1977, for example, the SLP had 44 sections. Some of those sections had problems similar to what others have today. Most of the larger sections were organized in the larger metropolitan areas, and most of those sections could be counted on to order Labor News pamphlets for sale at their public meetings, to place with local bookstores, or to donate to local libraries and schools, etc. The job of moving the literature from Labor News shelves and into the field was simpler back then. It was largely a cooperative effort, with the National Office filling the part of manufacturer and supplier, and the sections filling the part of “middleman” (or “middleperson”) in getting that literature into the hands of the final “consumer.” When new literature came in a general letter went out, orders were placed and pamphlets were shipped. On the whole, it was a pretty straightforward proposition.

Things are different today. The Party has only one-fourth the number of sections and one-half the membership it had 20 years ago. What remains is every bit as good as what we had back then, but there is far less of it.

Not too surprisingly, then, the Labor News does not move literature in the same quantities as it did 25 or 30 years ago because the old formula no longer works very well.

When the Labor News inventory was taken last December, for example, it still showed a stock of 288 copies of that 19-year-old printing of *Socialist Landmarks*. What that means is that shipments of this particular pamphlet have averaged 116 copies a year over a period of nearly two full decades. It might also suggest that the remaining supply would be good for 18 months more, except that sales and shipments for that title have averaged about 80 copies a year since 1991. As will be seen, however, 1996 was an above-average year for *Socialist Landmarks*, though it was not a stellar year for the New York labor News.

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According to the Labor News inventory, there were 20,560 SLP books and pamphlets in stock on December 31, 1995. That figure does not include works from other publishers, SLP National Convention Reports, or the older *Socialist Studies*. Those were included in the inventory, of course, but here I have weeded them out. The books and pamphlets I mean are those published by the Labor News, including the *Socialist Studies* that are printed with covers.

The worst seller on the Labor News list of “10 worst sellers” for 1996 was the hard-cover edition of Marx’s *Class Struggles in France*. There were 140 copies in stock on December 31, 1995, and 141 copies in stock on December 31, 1996.

Two close runners-up in the race for the bottom sold zero copies, there was one that sold one, two that sold three, one that sold four, and three that sold five. Indeed, of the 70 SLP books and pamphlets stocked by the Labor News at the end of 1995, 24 sold fewer than 10 copies apiece and only three sold as many as 100. The 10 pamphlets that made the New York Labor News list of “best sellers” for 1996 were the following:

<i>The History Behind the Holocaust</i>	40
<i>Socialist Reconstruction of Society</i>	40
<i>Socialism Today</i>	50
<i>Earth Day and May Day: Two Views of the Future</i>	53
<i>Nationalism: Working-Class Nemesis</i>	57
<i>The Nature of Soviet Society</i>	58
<i>Capitalism and Unemployment</i>	74
<i>Socialist Landmarks</i>	177
<i>Workers and the ‘Workerless’ Economy</i>	235
<i>The ‘Constant Revolution’</i>	283
Total	1,067

These 10 pamphlets alone accounted for 60 percent of all Labor News sales in 1996. A total of 1,779 SLP books and pamphlets were sold and shipped during the year, which left 18,781 books and pamphlets in stock as of December 31, 1996. At that rate it will take 10 or 11 more years to exhaust the supply.

Another part of the problem with moving SLP literature,

of course, is that a large percentage of it is old and out of date. Less than half of the 10 titles included on my “best sellers” list for 1996 are products of the 1990s, and only one of only five pamphlets published in the 1990s failed to make it onto that list last year.

Thirty-four percent of the pamphlets that make up the Party’s stock of literature today are works of Arnold Petersen, the most recent of which is the expanded edition of *The Supreme Court: Watchdog of Capitalism*. There is nothing wrong with keeping 27 of Comrade Petersen’s books and pamphlets on the list of Labor News publications while they continue to serve the Party’s purposes. However, at this late date they should not still account for more than one-third of the total number of SLP books and pamphlets listed in the Labor News catalogue.

Writing and publishing new SLP literature, together with developing new and better ways of getting that literature into circulation, obviously is essential. How high a place these two important matters should occupy on the list of priorities is something this convention must consider. The personnel available for performing these tasks are severely taxed as it is, and they are also needed to perform other important tasks that cannot be neglected. However, these are two that the convention cannot ignore as it plots a course for the SLP to follow over the next two years.

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The latest casualty among the basic pamphlets is *Industrial Unionism: Selected Editorials*, which is being removed from the New York Labor News catalogue. It joins a list of out-of-print De Leon pamphlets that already included the following titles: *As to Politics; Capitalism versus Socialism* (the De Leon-Berry Debate); *Fifteen Questions About Socialism; Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress; Marxian Science and the Colleges* (cloth edition still available); *Socialism versus “Individualism”* (the De Leon-Carmody Debate); *Socialist Economics in Dialogue; Socialist versus Capitalist Economics* (Marx on Mallock); *The ST&LA versus “Pure and Simple” Trade Unionism* (the De Leon-Harriman Debate); *Unity*; and *What Means This Strike?*

Computer disks store the texts of seven of the nine pam-

phlets mentioned. The exceptions are *Socialism versus "Individualism"* and *Socialist Economics in Dialogue*. The former is being scanned at present, and about two-thirds of the "Uncle Sam & Brother Jonathan" dialogues that make up the latter have been typed in the normal course of having all of De Leon's works typed onto computer disks.

Some of these pamphlets occupy much lower positions on the list of printing priorities than do some of the others. De Leon's debate with Job Harriman and his speech on unity with the old Socialist Party obviously do not warrant the same consideration that is due to the Berry and Carmody debates, *As to Politics*, *Marx on Mallock* or *What Means This Strike?* Together with *Industrial Unionism: Selected Editorials*, these five pamphlets top the current list of printing priorities. However, De Leon's *Fifteen Questions About Socialism* and *Flashlights of the Amsterdam Congress* also deserve consideration, as does Gustav Bang's *Crises in European History*, which is also out of print.

It would be easy to extend the list to include such out-of-print SLP books and pamphlets as De Leon's translation of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx's *Wage-Labor and Capital*, his *Value, Price and Profit*, Engels' *Socialism: From Utopia to Science* and, of course, our edition of the authorized translation of the *Communist Manifesto*. Computer disks hold most of these works also, and there is also one that stores the complete text of Volume I of Marx's *Capital*. Extending the list even further to include three collections of De Leon editorials printed as supplements to *The People*, particularly the collection on racism and immigration, would not be difficult.

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Incidentally, not all the SLP pamphlets scanned onto computer disks are necessarily in short supply, and not all the things stored have been printed as pamphlets in the past. Apart from those already mentioned, computer disks also store the following De Leon texts:

The Burning Question of Trades Unionism; Capitalism Means War; The Demise of Free Elections; Evolution of a Liberal (Watson on the Gridiron); "Labor Parties"; *Racism and Immigration; Reform or Revolution; The SLP and Free Elec-*

tions; *Socialist Reconstruction of Society*; *The Vatican in Politics*; *A Socialist in Congress: His Conduct and Responsibilities* and *Socialism vs. Anarchism*.

Scanned pamphlets and possible pamphlets from other authors include: *Free Trade* (Marx); *Gotha Program* (Marx); *Materialist Conception of History* (Bang, but not to be confused with *Crises in European History*), and *The Wages System* (Engels).

Three other SLP pamphlets on which present stock is ample have been scanned. They are *The SLP and the U.S.S.R.*, *The Nature of Soviet Society* and *The Great Depression*.

We also have what are believed to be dependable Spanish translations of *Reform or Revolution*, *The Burning Question of Trades Unionism* and *Socialist Reconstruction of Society*. Two of these were pamphlets at one time, and copies of each have been sent to Spanish-speaking members who were thought to have an interest in forming a Spanish committee similar to the old German committee. However, nothing further has developed along that line, and unless there are signs of a more active interest from that quarter it is doubtful that much progress will be made toward getting any of these pamphlets into print again, at least not any time soon.

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In theory, the National Office should be able to get on with the business of publishing new editions of the basic pamphlets, some of which only need new introductions, footnotes, cover designs and a final round of proofreading to be ready for the press. In theory, it is possible to write and print the needed introductions as Labor News Notes in *The People* at a rate of one a month, or one every other month. However, there are more formidable problems to consider.

One of those problems, of course, is money. I don't mean only the money needed to print some or all the pamphlets mentioned, though that obviously enters into it. Three years ago, for instance, it cost the Party \$1,100 to print 1,000 copies of the 44-page pamphlet *The Great Depression*. It would probably cost between \$1,300 and \$1,500 to print a pamphlet in that quantity today, depending on the number of pages involved and certain other variables. Even if a decision were

made to go ahead with all the pamphlets and possible pamphlets mentioned, it would take at least as many months as there are titles to work our way through the entire backlog. Many other problems will come to a head long before those months roll by.

One of those problems may well be where to store the literature, leaflets, packaging and other supplies already in stock, not to mention the many bound volumes of *The People*—weekly and daily—that date from the 1890s. None of this would be worthy of one moment's thought if it were possible to keep all the space available today for an indefinite time. However, keeping all of it for the next three years may not be possible. It would cost the Party much more to keep it than it would to print all the pamphlets and possible pamphlets mentioned here, and if it becomes necessary to get along without all the present space it will take some ingenuity to fit the present literature stock, and the other things mentioned, into a smaller space already fully occupied by the National Office, the Business Office and the Editorial Department.

The other side of the coin, of course, is that the Party cannot get along without its basic literature, anymore than it could get along without a headquarters, no matter how small and cramped those headquarters might become.

Apart from that, the Party also needs new literature that applies basic principles to modern conditions, and particularly one on Socialist Industrial Unionism. This need for a larger body of sound Marxist-De Leonist literature will only increase as time goes by.

We cannot expect to accomplish all these things all at once, but they can all be accomplished in due course if we lay our plans carefully, keep patience, and exert the self-discipline that is so necessary for accomplishing anything that is worthy of serious effort.

Works of Daniel De Leon—I did not take time to add up all the articles that have been copy edited and typed since last year's NEC Session, but substantial progress has been made on both fronts.

The actual typing had reached the end of October 1901 when the NEC met. Since then, Comrade Parker has

brought it forward to April 4, 1904. However, his is a catch-up “game,” and I suspect it will take many months for him to reach the point where the copy editing stands at present.

That part of the work was complete through November 16, 1905, when the NEC met. It has since moved forward to September 20, 1911, and I have hopes of finishing the whole thing off by the end of August. There are too many uncertainties about the headquarters situation and other Party matters at present to be certain about this. However, the end is within sight.

While I cannot be entirely accurate about how much work has been accomplished down to the minute, I do know that 4,200 articles, speeches, debates and other works of De Leon’s were typed and stored on computer disks as of April 20. That included 2,946 items taken from the *Daily People* and 2,276 from *The People* and other publications. I also know that 3,060 additional articles, etc., were proofed and ready for typing on that date. Accordingly, at least 7,260 items from these publications were typed or ready for typing by April 20.

In addition, the manuscript to an address De Leon delivered in March 1911 on the “Marxian Law of Value” is stored on a computer disk. A lengthy report on that address was printed in the *Daily People*, but the text itself never was. The text is among the things that were buried away at the headquarters until it was rediscovered a few years ago.

More recently, I came across a report on a speech De Leon delivered in Scotland in 1904. It was printed in *The Socialist*, which was the official organ of the SLP of Great Britain. Another report on a speech De Leon delivered in Scotland from a Glasgow newspaper has been reprinted in *The People* once or twice in the past, but this one is different.

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The National Office recently bought microform editions of *The Nationalist*, the *Industrial Union Bulletin* and the *Industrial Union News*.

The first mentioned, of course, was the publication of the Bellamy movement, with which De Leon was active before he joined the SLP in 1890. I have made only one pass through *The Nationalist*, primarily to locate “The Voice of Madison”

to check against what was included in the SLP pamphlet *James Madison and Karl Marx*. However, I also came across two partial letters of De Leon's that were printed in the "News of the Movement" column that appeared in the magazine. These two small items are "new discoveries," for me at least, and they will be added to the rest of the collection.

The *Industrial Union Bulletin* was published by the Chicago IWW from 1907 to 1909. The most interesting things about it, of course, are that it contains the Chicago IWW's version of what went on at the 1908 IWW convention, including the proceedings, Vincent St. John's account of the speech De Leon gave in defense of his credentials and those of other SLP members sent as delegates by various unions. St. John, as some of you may know, gave his speech in response to De Leon the title of "The Worker versus the Intellectual," and his rendition of what De Leon had to say was, of course, printed under the heading of "The Intellectual versus the Worker."

The *Industrial Union News* was the official organ of the Detroit, or De Leonist IWW, that reorganized on the basis of the original IWW Preamble following the 1908 debacle at Chicago. The National Office also has bound volumes of this particular paper, which was published from 1912 to 1924. That was the year in which the Detroit IWW, by then calling itself the Workers International Industrial Union, or WIIU, dissolved.

The National Office now has complete microform editions of several SLP newspapers, including the *National Socialist* (1878), the *Workmen's Advocate* (1883–1890) and, of course, *The People* (1891–1900), *Daily People* (1900–1914), *Weekly People* (1900–1979), and our modern-day version of *The People*. It also has a set of *The Socialist* that runs from 1903 through 1910. The set is incomplete, however, and it is not bound.

I am hoping to add the microform edition of *The Socialist* to the National Office's microform collection of SLP publications. Though I have not succeeded in locating a source, I am informed by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin that several universities and colleges around the country have it. One of them should be able to provide me with the information that will be needed to locate a company that sells it.

On motion, this section of the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

The National Secretary read the following section of his report:

NEC and National Officers

Under date of January 8, 1997, the National Office issued the following call to the sections of the SLP:

Dear Comrades:

Canvass for Members to Serve On the National Executive Committee, 1997–1999 Term of Office

Article V, Section 2(a) of the Party's Constitution provides as follows:

"The NEC shall be elected for a two-year term by the National Convention, each of those elected to be specifically approved by a general vote of the whole Party."

This provision enables the National Convention to elect a National Executive Committee of seven members from among the membership as a whole. Any member of the Party who meets the eligibility requirements, regardless of where that member happens to live, may be elected. The intent, of course, is to provide the National Convention with the widest latitude possible in electing the NEC from among those who are both eligible and willing to serve.

For the National Convention to exercise its best judgment in this regard, however, it should be informed in advance of all eligible members who would be willing to serve, if elected. Accordingly, your sections are hereby called upon to submit the names of all such eligible members who are prepared to accept the commitment associated with membership on the NEC for the 1997–1999 term of office. The eligibility provision of the Constitution is Section 3 of Article V, as follows:

"All members of the NEC shall be members who have held continued membership in the Party for at least two years, and must be citizens of the United States."

To meet this requirement members, apart from being citizens, must have been members in good standing of the Party since May 1, 1995.

Please Note: The sections are not being called upon to nominate candidates for the NEC. They are simply being asked to submit the names of the eligible members who are prepared to accept election. The sections, however, are under no obligation to submit the name of any member who, in its judgment, is

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not qualified for membership on the NEC.

The names of all members submitted in response to this inquiry will be presented to the National Convention, which will elect the NEC for the 1997–1999 term of office, subject to approval by a general vote of the Party as a whole.

Please do not submit the name of any member who is not prepared to accept the commitment to serve if elected by the convention.

Your section's response to this letter must be received by **Friday, April 25, 1997**. Please use the enclosed form when responding.

Fraternally yours,
[Signed] ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

Enclosed with the call was a form for the sections' use when reporting the names of members for consideration by the National Convention. In part, that form read as follows:

Dear Comrade Bills:

This is to inform you that the following members of Section _____ are eligible to serve on the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Labor Party under the applicable provisions of the Party's Constitution, Article V, Section 3.

This will also inform you that each of the members listed has explicitly informed the section that he or she is committed to serve as a member of the NEC for the 1997–1999 term of office, if elected, and is prepared to do his or her utmost to fulfill the duties and obligations of an NEC member under the applicable provisions of the Party's Constitution, Article V, including that of attending the regular NEC Session and any Special NEC Session that may be called during the course of the 1997–1999 term, barring unforeseen illnesses or emergency situations beyond their personal control.

A similar call was issued to all National Members-at-Large under the same date, and a second call to the sections and members-at-large was issued on March 24. Responses to the calls were as follows:

Section San Francisco Bay Area Donna Bills
Section Cook Co. Henry Coretz
Section Portland Sid Fink
Section Philadelphia George S. Taylor
Section Milwaukee Michael R. Mahoney

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National Member-at-Large Bernard Bortnick
National Member-at-Large Richard H. Cassin
National Member-at-Large Charles Turner

The National Convention has the obligation to give each of these names serious consideration, but it is under no obligation to limit its consideration to those listed here. It is the convention's responsibility to elect seven members who, in your judgment, are best suited and most likely to discharge the duties of NEC member in a manner that will serve the Party's interests.

In addition, the National Convention has the responsibility under the Party's Constitution of electing three members to fill the offices of Editor of *The People*, Financial Secretary and National Secretary for the 1997–1999 term of office. The offices of Editor and Financial Secretary are vacant at present, and the National Secretary's term of office expires with this convention.

On motion, this section of the report was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

Introduction of Resolutions

The National Secretary reported that several resolutions had been received by the National Office, which he proceeded to introduce as follows:

Resolution #1A from Section Akron, Ohio:

Resolution to Change Present Masthead of *The People*

(1) We herewith propose that the Party replace the Roman chariot with a portrait of Daniel De Leon, founder of the SLP program.

(2) With this proposal we present a rough makeup of this change, taking into consideration the necessary touchup and artwork needed.

(3) That the editorial department be at liberty to make the final decisions in the development of the project.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] PETER KAPITZ, Organizer
Section Akron

On motion, the resolution was rejected.
Resolution #1B from Section Minneapolis:

**Section Minneapolis Resolution
To the 1997 National Convention**

Section Minneapolis has reviewed the following references to SLP member involvement with other left-wing organizations, namely:

1. SLP Constitution, 1993 edition, [Article XII] Sections 5C and 6, p. 21.
2. Organizational Norms and Procedures with related rulings, Ruling #5, p. 7.
3. Thirty-first National Convention, p. 190, as it relates to the aforementioned.

In view of these references, the times and state of our membership numbers, and the threat to our continued existence, we offer the following:

Whereas the decline in membership has reached dangerously low levels; and

Whereas the tactical methodology up to the present has held that "SLP members should not participate in or appear as speakers at rallies, forums, conventions, etc., held by other left organizations," we find that this tactic is not only at odds with our rich history [for instance, the founding of the IWW], but has been fruitless in our recruitment efforts for several years. While we don't disagree that we shouldn't aid the building of rival left organizations, our present direction apparently denies legitimate SLP agitation opportunities such as: 1) stating our position in contradistinction to other organizations, 2) having our literature on display [if invited to do so], and 3) inviting participants at such gatherings to our discussion groups and study classes, and 4) writing editorial answers or articles in defense of our positions in other left-wing publications or journals.

Therefore be it resolved, That ruling #5 in Organizational Norms and Procedures, p. 7, is detrimental to our *present* and *urgent* membership and sympathizer recruitment efforts and should be drastically revised or stricken from our activity guidelines. Furthermore, we should gladly assent to invitations by other organizations asking for speakers to explain

our program and position. [One must remember that if we are invited as speaking participants we would usually be allowed to display our literature. We should also note that the expenses are usually borne by the sponsoring organization.]

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] KARL HECK, Organizer
Section Minneapolis

On motion, the resolution was referred to an appropriate committee when elected.

Resolution #1C from Section Minneapolis:

**Section Minneapolis Resolution
To the 1997 National Convention**

Whereas SLP funding is precarious at best; and

Whereas most SLP resources emanate from an aging and dying population;

Be it resolved, That the national organization request minimal individual \$100,000 contributions (\$500,000 to \$1,000,000 if the individual is so inclined) from public figures and celebrities such as comedians, actors, actresses, athletes, rock groups and other entertainers, or progressive individuals, that who may not be in agreement with our political positions but still appreciate the necessity of supporting a semblance of political democracy for a full political spectrum in our nation, since the present reality of same is conservative to ultraconservative/reactionary.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] KARL HECK, Organizer
Section Minneapolis

On motion, the resolution was rejected by a show of hands 6 in favor, 4 against.

At this point the Chair called for resolutions from delegates. None were presented. The National Secretary proceeded to introduce the following:

Resolution #3A from National Member-at-Large R. Schelin, Minnesota:

**Resolution to the 43rd National Convention
Of the Socialist Labor Party**

Whereas the SLP is presently in a critical period where

its continued existence seems to be in question despite the volume of literature that explains capitalism for what it is—a system of exploitation of man by man; and

Whereas our literature shows how to establish socialism as the next step up in man's never-ending struggle to reach the top; and

Whereas the brief explanation of "What Is Socialism?" in *The People* deals primarily with the governmental aspects of socialism rather than the social and economic, it shows the workers must organize into SIUs, and into a political party of labor, the purpose of which is to capture the political government only to adjourn it *sine die*, the workers in the SIU then move in to establish an industrial democracy; and

Whereas workers upon reading that explanation may not be enthused by it, for workers are for the most part "fed up" with unions, they don't trust government and the real meaning of democracy is lost to them as the capitalist media use the words capitalism and democracy synonymously.

Therefore be it resolved, That this 43rd National Convention of the SLP assembled here in Santa Clara, California, these days of May second through the fifth of 1997, do initiate a change of policy and require the N.O. to cause to be published a piece(s) of literature that could be called "Socialism: the American Dream" that would show the potential beauties of socialism to get the attention and interest of more workers so we can rebuild the SLP to its former strength.

Aspects of socialism to be covered in some detail should be:

- (1) There would be no involuntary unemployment.

- (2) Labor is now so productive that a few hours a day and a few days a week could provide one with a very comfortable and satisfying lifestyle, and during their productive years repay for childhood and provide for retirement.

- (3) Under socialism all women would find their rightful place in society.

- (4) All children shall be children, without the threat of child labor and without hunger or want.

- (5) Education will begin in childhood through adulthood and will be all-embracing, covering the sciences, math, arts, literature and music, as well as job training.

(6) All of society will benefit because the competition for jobs between the sexes and races will be no more. It will take some time for all the biases to cease, but in time they will.

(7) Medicinewill be advanced and the doctors, nurses and other medical workers will direct the medical field. Research will go on without the inhibitions of funding or lack thereof.

(8) Food will be produced for nutrition with no artificial colors or flavors.

(9) The freeing of all prisoners.

(10) The dismantling of the military.

(11) With the abolition of capitalism money will no longer be used. Time vouchers will replace money.

And be it further resolved, That this 43rd National Convention of the SLP does elect a committee to locate a person(s) who would be able and willing to produce such a piece(s) of literature at the earliest possible moment.

And be it further resolved, That to provide some funding for the above that a mandatory assessment be levied against each member of the SLP in an amount not less than five dollars (\$5.00) per month for no less a time than one year. That time could be extended at the request of the N.O./NEC.

I strongly urge the adoption of this resolution as a means to help save the SLP from disappearing from the pages of history.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] ROSS SCHELIN
National Member-at-Large

On motion, the resolution was rejected.

Resolution #3B from National Member-at-Large J. Campbell, Washington State:

A New Name Resolution

Whereas in spite of the best efforts of its members, the state of affairs of the SLP seems generally to be on the decline; and

Whereas appropriate names are important in promoting a cause, otherwise why do many actors and actresses choose different names, and authors often use pen names; and

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Whereas it has been claimed that socialism is a failure which causes it to be unpopular and, as such, does not support one's confidence or attract favorable attention; and

Whereas although the SLP's present name has gained respect, that respect may well be for the Party's important program rather than for the word "socialist" and does nothing to help us grow; and

Whereas we need enthusiasm for and acceptance of our principles in addition to whatever polite respect we may receive; and

Whereas strategy is important in winning a battle or cause, and a change of name would be a type of strategy; and

Whereas the sole purpose of the SLP is to try to awaken the working class to its mission of abolishing capitalism and establishing a nonprofit cooperative industrial democracy, we need a name to attract the attention of and to appeal to these important people; and

Therefore be it resolved, That the Socialist Labor Party change its name to the Industrial Democracy Party.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] JESSIE CAMPBELL
National Member-at-Large

On motion, the resolution was rejected.

At 3:50 p.m. a motion was passed to recess for 15 minutes. Reconvened at 4:05 p.m.

Discussion of the National Secretary's Report

On motion, the sections of the National Secretary's report are to be taken up seriatim.

Discussion on the section "National Headquarters" began at 4:13 p.m. and ended at 4:58 p.m.

Discussion then began on the section "Party Finances" and ended at 5:20 p.m. when a motion was adopted to recess for five minutes. Reconvened at 5:30 p.m.

Discussion began on the section "State of Organization" and ended at 6:15 p.m.

Discussion then began on the section "General Activities" and ended at 6:55 p.m.

A motion, made and seconded, to suspend the rules for

the day in order to form committees was not concurred in.

On motion, at 7 p.m. the convention recessed until 8:30 p.m.

The convention was called to order at 8:35 p.m.

Discussion began on the section "Party Press and Literature" and ended at 9:35 p.m.

Discussion then began on the section "NEC and National Officers." Discussion ended at 9:45 p.m.

At 9:48 p.m. a motion was adopted to adjourn until 9 a.m., Saturday, May 3, 1997.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION, MAY 3, 1997

The convention was called to order at 9 a.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

S. Fink requested to be excused for one hour to take care of pressing personal business. On motion, S. Fink's request was granted.

On motion, the minutes of Friday's sessions were approved as read.

The Sergeant at Arms reported five visitors present.

Determination of Committees

A motion was adopted that two committees be constituted as follows: Committee on Headquarters and Finances and Committee on General Activities and Organization.

Referring Matters to Committees

On motion, the National Secretary's report entitled "Introduction" was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "National Headquarters" was referred to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "Party Finances" was referred to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "State of Organization" was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

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On motion, the National Secretary's report on "General Activities" was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "Party Press and Literature" was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

On motion, the National Secretary's report on "NEC and National Officers" was referred to the Committee on Headquarters and Finances.

On motion, Resolution #1B was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

Election of Committees

On motion, the Committee on Headquarters and Finances to consist of five members.

On motion, the Committee on General Activities and Organization to consist of six members.

Committee on Headquarters and Finances: B. Bortnick, C. Camacho, B. Cozzini, P. Kapitz and D. Geier were nominated. On motion, nominations were closed. On motion, these five members were unanimously elected to constitute the committee.

Committee on General Activities and Organization: On motion, the remaining delegates were elected to constitute the committee as follows: R. Burns, H. Coretz, S. Fink, K. Heck, G.S. Taylor and C. Turner.

On motion, the convention adjourned until 9 a.m., Sunday, May 4.

MORNING SESSION, SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1997

The convention was called to order at 9:10 a.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The Sergeant at Arms reported five visitors present.

On motion, the minutes of Saturday's session were approved as read.

Reports of Committees

Committee on General Activities and Organization

R. Burns reported progress.

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Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick reported progress.

New Business

The National Secretary reported that an undated resolution from Section New York City was belatedly received at the National Office on May 3, and that the envelope in which it was mailed was postmarked April 10. A motion was passed that the convention allow this resolution to be presented.

The National Secretary presented the following:

Resolution (#1D) on Audiotapes

Whereas:

- 1) Many workers are poor readers.
- 2) They get their information, such as it is, from TV or radio.
- 3) It's possible many may lack the reading ability or inclination to understand our program.

Therefore be it resolved:

- 1) Workers requesting information should be sent an audiotope which explains our program and principles.
- 2) We may use an existing leaflet (or leaflets) to provide a text for a tape of no longer than 30 minutes.
- 3) If workers won't or can't read, let's make it possible for them to hear the SLP voice. Perhaps they will listen.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] ALBERT MITCH, Organizer
Section New York City

On motion, the resolution was referred to the Committee on General Activities and Organization.

At 9:40 a.m. the convention adjourned until 4:30 p.m.

AFTERNOON SESSION, SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1997

The convention was called to order at 4:40 p.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The Sergeant at Arms reported eight visitors present.

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Reports of Committees

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick reported progress.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

R. Burns reported progress.

At 4:45 p.m., the convention adjourned until 8 p.m.

EVENING SESSION, SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1997

The convention was called to order at 8:07 p.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The Sergeant at Arms reported six visitors present.

Reports of Committees

Committee on General Activities and Organization

R. Burns presented the following report:

Re "Introduction" to the National Secretary's Report

The "Introduction" was re-read by the committee members and the message from the National Secretary to the delegates, which is contained in the report, was closely examined.

The message is, in one respect, very simple. The Socialist Labor Party is facing a crisis. It is a crisis which may be terminal. This is a simple fact and it is not really of any surprise to the delegates.

The crisis comes even though the members of the SLP have been carrying on a hundred-year struggle to educate the workers of this country. The crisis comes because those not enough workers are ~~not~~ responding to or supporting a program which is designed to work in their best interests.

The National Secretary goes on to inform us that the other parts of his report will contain facts and information, as well as some ideas, on how to begin to solve those problems, to turn the situation around and to rebuild.

We of the committee understand the gravity of the situation and agree with the National Secretary that it is our responsibility, that it is the responsibility of the members in

the field to prevent this terminal crisis, to increase our activities and to do all that we can to “fashion a Party-building program.”

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER
Committee on General Activities and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to substitute the word “those” with the words “not enough” and to strike the word “not” in the second sentence of the third paragraph. On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

R. Burns presented the following report:

Re Resolution (#1D) on Audiotapes

The committee acknowledges there is some merit to the resolution, but not at this time when such an undertaking adds an additional burden on an understaffed National Office and moreover calls for additional spending when the Party’s finances are strained. Individual sections already have the right to reproduce official Party literature for agitational purposes.

Therefore, the committee hereby recommends nonconcurrence in the resolution.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER
Committee on General Activities and Organization

On motion, the report was adopted.

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick presented the following report:

The Headquarters

The committee has reviewed this part of the National Secretary’s report. We have also held discussions among ourselves, interviewed ~~Comrades Robert Bills, Donna Bills, Nathan Karp and Ken Boettcher~~ the National Secretary and his staff for their views on the status and prospects for the National Headquarters. Additionally, we have visited the Na-

tional Office to personally assess conditions, particularly in view of the Party's impending and probable lease negotiations for those premises.

This report is necessarily circumscribed by the opportunities and limitations observed by the National Secretary's observation: "The only thing that delegates can do at this convention is to assess the current headquarters situation and decide *where the remaining resources might fit into any Party-building program of activity* that it decides." [Emphasis ours.]

By "resources" are meant the human, physical and financial basis of our activities. The latter is dealt with in a separate section of our report. Hence, the following addresses the former issue.

(1) *Physical Conditions*: This committee's tour of the National Headquarters premises tends to confirm the judgment of the National Secretary that a consolidation of the ground floor (Suite 113) and the second-floor offices (Suite 209) could be accomplished and the Party's lease renewal could result in some savings.

Currently, Suite 113 is occupied with the storage of Party literature, NYLN and *The People* mailing operations, Party accounts records storage, sections' and state committees' records, Party journal archives, steel cabinetry and shelving in varying degrees of use, etc. Some space of Suite 113 is occasionally used by Comrade Nathan Karp in his ongoing work of sorting, classifying, reviewing and packaging of archive material for eventual shipment to the Wisconsin State Historical Society. This important work performed by Comrade Karp absorbs a great deal of the time he spends at the National Office, aside from his work producing articles for publication in *The People*.

Inevitably, this consolidation will crowd Suite 209. It may be possible to move accounts records and less frequently accessed records and furnishings to temporary off-site storage facilities while moving the remaining archives, literature and NYLN equipment to Suite 209 until such time as all remaining archives have been reviewed and disposed of. These are practical decisions best left to the discretion of the National Secretary and the headquarters staff.

(2) *Staff*: The National Secretary's observation at the last

convention that: "The National Office has virtually been absorbed by the editorial department and cannot function properly..." summarizes part of the dilemma this convention presently faces. This dilemma is further compounded by dwindling Party funds, preventing the national organization from even considering hiring any new staff, even if such personnel were available from the field.

To better visualize the present conditions at the N.O. we need only consider the following:

Only ~~three~~ four staff members are working on a full-time basis while the other ~~three~~ two are "part time" employees, some of whom are in fact putting in full-time work!

Although editorial contributions from the field have substantially enabled *The People* to continue publication on a monthly basis, this still requires the National Secretary to devote a large amount of his time editing copy and writing articles in order to meet deadlines. His time continues to be largely absorbed by these responsibilities, often to the neglect of the equally important tasks of coordinating the activities of the sections, responding to the voluminous correspondence from the field, managing the day-to-day affairs of the Party and addressing the need for new and updated literature. Similarly, Comrade Donna Bills' time is absorbed by a multitude of tasks which have fallen on her by default. Comrade Gunderson continues to perform her duties with exemplary determination despite great personal difficulties, and because of this she has earned the sincere respect and eternal gratitude of the entire membership.

Comrade Boettcher continues to persevere. Although a part-time staff member, he performs both editorial and makeup tasks in publication of *The People*. Personal circumstances require he holds down two jobs that make his work-days lengthy.

These circumstances seem to point in only one direction: maintain the status quo in terms of staff, size and tasks. Nonetheless, consideration should be given to canvass the membership for members capable of filling any sudden vacancies on a temporary basis should they occur.

This committee is cognizant of the need to stimulate and coordinate a plan for contact work focused on increasing the membership.

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At the National Office level, steps will be made to provide sections with the focus on target contacts and offer whatever structure and instructions the National Office deems necessary for a successful membership drive.

At the section level, members' activities will be structured in accordance with the general plan envisioned in the report of our committee on general activities.

These measures, coupled with sustained financial support, can be the beginning of the redevelopment of our Party.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair

CHRIS CAMACHO, BRUCE COZZINI, DAVID GEIER,
PETER KAPITZ

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to substitute the word "four" for the word "three" and to substitute the word "two" for the word "three" in the ninth paragraph. An amendment was passed to substitute the words "Comrades Robert Bills, Donna Bills, Nathan Karp and Ken Boettcher" with the words "The National Secretary and his staff" in the first paragraph of the report. On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

At 9:05 p.m. a motion was passed to recess for five minutes. Reconvened at 9:10 p.m.

B. Bortnick presented the following report:

Party Finances

This committee studied the National Secretary's report on "Party Finances" and supplementary materials provided to the committee by the National Secretary, including:

1. Proposed new lease and cost breakdowns for its various options over the duration of the lease.
2. 1997 financial figures through April.
3. Financial figures for years 1991–1996.
4. Income figures from estates and funds 1991–1996.

In addition, the committee conferred with Comrade Gunderson and Comrade Bills on various aspects of the financial situation.

From this information, it is evident that the financial situation of the Party is critical, and that if it is not dealt

with, it threatens the ability of the Party to perform its work, and even its survival.

Shortfalls:

As Comrade Bills indicated in his report on "Party Finances," the decrease in Party reserves in the past two years, about \$210,500, has not resulted from increased expenditures, but from a decrease in income. Notably, in the past year an \$11,000 drop in income from special funds and a \$27,700 drop in estates contributed to a drop from these sources of about \$38,700. Since these have been among the largest sources of funds, their shortfall has been a large contributing factor in the decrease in the Party's reserves.

Expenses:

As to expenses, the critical one to consider at this point is the rent. A new lease must be in place by July 31, 1997, if the Party is to remain in its current offices, not only the increase in the rate must be considered, but the total obligation of the Party over the three-year term of the lease. Decisions on the landlord's lease offer must be made by the end of this month.

For the current space rented, second-floor office and first-floor storage, the increase amounts to about \$10,500 in the first year, with CPI adjustments added yearly. The total three-year obligation under this option is approximately \$124,000. An option in the lease allows the Party to drop the first-floor storage area from the lease (\$879/month). If the Party takes that option and relocates the material currently stored there, the annual increase drops to \$2,300/year, and the total three-year obligation drops to \$91,000.

If the lease is to be renewed, it appears to this committee that the best option is to rent only the upstairs office and move out of the storage area.

In addition to rent, payroll must also increase to account for increased cost of living for the staff. An annual increase of about \$3,000 may be required.

Projections:

For the current year, if we base estimated deficits on 1996 figures (leaving SLP Defense Fund income to be added at the end), and consider increases in rent after July 31, 1997, and increases in payroll after June 30, 1997, the

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Party's reserves would diminish as follows:

Reserves, Jan. 1, 1997	\$193,500
7 months' deficit at \$8,900/mo.	- 62,300
5 months at \$9,090/mo.	-45,450
6 months' payroll increase	- 1,500
End of 1997	\$ 84,250
SLP Defense Fund	+50,000
Total end of 1997	\$134,250

For subsequent years, if expenditures other than rent and payroll did not increase, and if income remained the same as 1996, the deficit would increase as follows:

1996 deficit	\$106,800
Additional rent/year	+ 2,300
Additional payroll/year	+ 3,000
Total	\$111,500

Clearly, if additional income equivalent to the amount raised in the SLP Defense Fund is not forthcoming on a yearly basis, Party reserves will be used up by the end of 1998 (\$134,250 - \$111,500 = \$22,750). Even with an increase of \$50,000 in funds income annually, the annual deficit would be reduced to about \$61,500, an amount which would, by the end of 1999, with no changes in bequest income or program expenditure, completely exhaust the current reserves. Even with this added income, the reserves would be extended for only a year, barely allowing for maintenance of National Headquarters operations for the three years of the new lease.

Additional Considerations:

In addition, this analysis does not consider the decrease in interest income as reserves dwindle or the need to maintain some reserves as a "shutdown fund" to allow reasonable severance and transitional insurance benefits for staff or the orderly disposition of Party physical and intellectual property if the task of rebuilding the Party is unsuccessful.

Summary:

The above projections have been based upon a variety of assumptions concerning costs and incomes. In fact, events outside of these assumptions could change the estimated fig-

ures significantly. They would not, however, change the urgency of keeping the funds at the highest level that the members can manage. Obviously it is imperative that use of resources must be focused in the next year upon those activities that will build the Party to increase both its agitational abilities and its ability to support itself. In the next months it will be important for the NEC and the N.O. to continually monitor both the funds and the activities of the Party to assure that our resources are being used most effectively.

Since we will need funds to accomplish the goals of rebuilding, this committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

1. As a way of increasing income on an ongoing basis, promote the Sustainer Fund to the sections, members-at-large and sympathizers. To support this goal it is important for sections and members-at-large to step up contact work and other activities that can increase membership and financial support as rapidly as possible.

2. Recommend that sections increase dues.

3. Continue to emphasize that members and sympathizers establish provisions to make the SLP a beneficiary upon their demise. These provisions can take the form of joint bank accounts, insurance beneficiary or bequests in a will.

4. Members should be advised that detailed information on these options and procedures can be found in the Party's pamphlet "Steps You Can Take to Provide for the Financial Security of the Socialist Labor Party," and that members and sympathizers should be encouraged to obtain copies of this manual.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair

CHRIS CAMACHO, BRUCE COZZINI, DAVID GEIER,
PETER KAPITZ

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

A motion, made and seconded, to adopt the report was not concurred in. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

R. Burns presented the following report:

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State of the Organization

The committee reviewed the report and appreciates the thorough research and presentation of facts evidenced in the report. What can be learned by the array of facts and figures?

Well, the National Secretary has stressed the need to build up the strength of our Party by recruiting new members into its ranks. He stated: "A major concern for any National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party, of course, is to consider and adopt measures that will assist in building up the sections of the Party through the addition of new membership. Only new additions to the membership will reduce the problems most sections face today and enable them to reach out to larger numbers of workers in the cities and metropolitan areas where they are centered." But how is this to be done? One of our problems is "motivation." Organizers must try more to motivate section members to find something in their individual ability to help the Party. A little more push, a little more shove, a little more encouragement.

Another indispensable activity is the formation of discussion groups. Some sections already conduct such activities in public libraries. Some use alternative bookstores, etc., most of which are generally free of charge. The National Office can draw up flyers that are attractive and colorful upon request to advertise most section activities, including discussion group sessions.

Since warmer weather has arrived in the northern parts of the country, the use of card tables outdoors should be considered. Some of our senior members who cannot participate in certain section activities, such as leaflet distribution, could place folding tables on sidewalks at busy intersections, at popular pedestrian crossings near colleges and universities, and in front of bookstores with leaflets stamped with the local phone number of the section. A contact list should be at hand.

At another level, the members'-at-large situation presents a special problem. One-half of the present membership exist, by itself, in an isolated and somewhat alienated island. A stronger "umbilical cord" needs to be attached from them to the SLP "mainland." Certainly a steadier flow of corre-

spondence needs to be established. ~~One way to do this would be giving members at large addresses to the sections and NEC membership and encouraging more friendly and guiding letters between them.~~

~~The National Office can be relied to keep on track with members at large as best as it can but it presently needs all the help the organizers and NEC and members can give.~~

The committee deeply appreciates the greetings and information from our Canadian comrades.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER
Committee on General Activities and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was made to insert the word “them” at the end of the last sentence in the fifth paragraph. An amendment to strike the last sentence in the fifth paragraph and the first sentence in the sixth paragraph was concurred in by a show of hands 5 in favor, 4 against. On motion, the report as amended was not concurred in. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

At 10 p.m. the convention adjourned until 9 a.m., Monday, May 5.

MORNING SESSION, MONDAY, MAY 5, 1997

The convention was called to order at 9:07 a.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The Sergeant at Arms reported five visitors present.

On motion, the minutes of Sunday’s sessions were approved as read.

The National Secretary informed the delegates that he has received information that indicates M. James’ absence is due to reasons beyond his control, the details of which we do not know at the moment.

Reports of Committees

Committee on General Activities and Organization

R. Burns reported progress.

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Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick reported progress.

At 9:20 a.m. a motion was passed to recess until 3 p.m.

AFTERNOON SESSION, MONDAY, MAY 5, 1997

The convention was called to order at 3 p.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The Sergeant at Arms reported eight visitors present.

Reports of Committees

Mileage Committee

C. Camacho presented the following report:

Your committee reports that the delegates listed below have reported that their mileage in attending the convention is as follows:

<i>Sections</i>	<i>Delegates</i>	
S.F. Bay Area (1)	Bruce Cozzini	\$ 0
Cook Co. (1)	Henry Coretz	0
Minneapolis (1)	Karl Heck	201.00
Akron (1)	Peter Kapitz	270.00
Cleveland (1)	Robert Burns	270.00 0
Portland (1)	Sid Fink	90.20
Philadelphia (1)	George S. Taylor	388.00
Milwaukee (1)	David Geier	340.00
Nat'l. Mbrs.-at-Lge. (4)	Bernard Bortnick	0
	Christian Camacho	304.00
	Charles Turner	112.80
Nat'l Sec'y	Robert Bills	0

In keeping with this report, your committee recommends that the delegates be paid the amounts due them, the total being: ~~\$1,976.00~~ \$1,706.00.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] CHRIS CAMACHO, Chair
CHARLES TURNER
Mileage Committee

An amendment was passed that the report reflect that R. Burns submitted no mileage expense. On motion, the report

as amended was adopted. [See page 84.]

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick presented the following report:

Party Finances

This committee studied the National Secretary's report on "Party Finances" and supplementary materials provided to the committee by the National Secretary, including:

1. Proposed new lease and cost breakdowns for its various options over the duration of the lease.
2. 1997 financial figures through April.
3. Financial figures for years 1991–1996.
4. Income figures from estates and funds 1991–1996.

In addition, the committee conferred with Comrade Gunderson and the National Secretary on various aspects of the financial situation.

From this information, it is evident that the financial situation of the Party is critical, and that the continuing generous support of the membership will be necessary to ensure the Party's survival.

SLP Defense Fund

The SLP Defense Fund, launched in January of this year has been a great success. Party members, realizing the urgent financial needs of the Party as detailed in the February 10th letter to the membership, responded in a most impressive manner. As of the National Convention Banquet almost \$48,000 had been received, and it is expected that late arriving contributions will push it all the way to the \$50,000 goal.

The National Office and the convention were greatly impressed by the response of the membership. It has helped to shore up the Party's reserves and allow the Party to look toward the future and the continuation of the Party's work. And, of course, that future will continue to require ongoing generous support.

Among the obligations that the Party must commit to is a new three (3) year lease on its office space starting July 31, 1997. Even with the release of the storage area used now for archives and the New York Labor News, this lease will represent a cost of about \$91,000 over the next three (3) years.

Beyond the lease, the Party will require another esti-

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mated \$161,000 over the next three (3) years, which will need to be raised from the membership. This translates to about \$54,000 needed from the members and sympathizers each year.

The Party plans to use these funds in a concerted effort to increase the membership, build stronger sections and a more effective organization. In the next months it will be important for the NEC and the N.O. to continually monitor both the funds and the activities of the Party to assure that our resources are being used most effectively.

Since we will need funds to accomplish the goals of rebuilding, this committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

1. As a way of increasing income on an ongoing basis, promote the Sustainer Fund to the sections, members-at-large and sympathizers. To support this goal it is important for sections and members-at-large to step up contact work and other activities that can increase membership and financial support as rapidly as possible.

2. Continue to emphasize that members and sympathizers establish provisions to make the SLP a beneficiary upon their demise. These provisions can take the form of joint bank accounts, insurance beneficiary or bequests in a will.

3. Members should be advised that detailed information on these options and procedures can be found in the Party's pamphlet "Steps You Can Take to Provide for the Financial Security of the Socialist Labor Party," and that members and sympathizers should be encouraged to obtain copies of this manual.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
CHRIS CAMACHO, BRUCE COZZINI, DAVID GEIER,
PETER KAPITZ

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

R. Burns presented the following report:

General Activities

Your committee has studied the “General Activities” report of the National Secretary. He provided the 43rd National Convention delegates with statistical information regarding our 1996 Campaign for Socialism.

Though the statistics indicated modest progress in leaflet distribution over the previous year, all other activities from the field were on a downward slope; even the National Office was unable to perform all tasks assigned by the 1995 convention.

Your committee urges prioritization of necessary Party activities with membership recruitment and *The People* subscription growth heading the list in that order.

A membership drive requires planning for consistent and closer contact with prospects.

Since visiting a prospective member is the most important activity in the field at this time, it must be systematically and consistently carried out.

The People subscriber lists from the sections’ or members’ vicinity can be obtained from the National Office.

A grouping of subscribers based on the number of years their subscription has been in effect will become a good operations guide.

Use the phone to set up time and place for talking with the membership-prospect.

Personal friendly letters to prospective members can be substituted for phone calls or be used whenever there are no phone numbers available to schedule visitations.

Nearly the same procedure can be used for urging non-subscribing contacts to subscribe to *The People*, because phone conversation can be used to sell subs when face-to-face contacts are not feasible.

Leaflet distribution continues to be an important agitational activity and is the source of most of our contacts.

Public meetings and study classes are to be organized and used to attract prospective members.

Though radio and TV contacts with workers offer wide publicity prospects, care must be exercised to present the Party’s program accurately.

At present the National Office has limited resources to

SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY

help in electronic media presentation, therefore your committee urges the membership to confer with the National Office before undertaking any commitment in these areas.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

On motion, the report was adopted.

R. Burns presented the following report:

State of the Organization

The committee reviewed the report and appreciates the thorough research and presentation of facts evidenced in the report. What can be learned by the array of facts and figures?

In general, the report's scenario is a picture of dwindling membership, putting us on notice that something has to be done now to arrest this course. Building up the rank-and-file membership challenges all of us to add something to what we have been accustomed to doing or not doing. No one can question that more leaflet distribution, consistently, is needed. ~~No one would question more effort to build or buy new newsstands, even second hand ones, would help.~~ No one would question that an increase in all our traditional activities would help. The problem is motivation, somehow linking theory with practice. For this to take place, starting at the base of the pyramid, organizers of sections must talk and assess from individual members what they can do to start the ball rolling. Organizers must try more to motivate section members to find something in their individual ability to help the Party. A little more push, a little more shove, a little more encouragement. The National Office, to the best of its beleaguered circumstances, must also contact organizers with a little more push and shove, perhaps printing a more precise activity questioning form to be answered monthly. It certainly needs more information flowing from sections to the National Office.

At another level, the members'-at-large situation presents a special problem. One-half of the present membership exists, by themselves, in an isolated and somewhat alienated

island.

The answer to this problem, like the answer to many other problems, must depend mainly in increasing membership and therefore increasing sections.

The committee deeply appreciates the greetings and information from our Canadian comrades.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to strike the fourth sentence in the second paragraph. On motion, the report was referred back to committee.

R. Burns presented the following report:

Party Press and Literature

The National Secretary has done an enormous amount of detailed and careful work concerning our Party press and literature situation. He has thus given us a foundation for our future efforts to appeal to the working class.

The record of *The People* issues for the last years, and the number of copies of each issue are given. The results of classified ads placed in commercial magazines are listed. The statistics of leaflet distribution are noted. Our National Secretary discusses the problems which we are having with pamphlet and other literature distribution, as well as showing that the decline in our ability to move our literature is directly related to our declining membership list.

Another situation which is called to our attention is that we have large supplies of older material, certain books and pamphlets, but at the same time there are difficult problems in getting new material. Some of De Leon's basic material is no longer being published or listed in our catalogue.

One of the brighter notes which accompanies the grim statistics contained in the report is that more and more of De Leon's writings from not only the earliest issues of the *Weekly People* and the *Daily People*, and including even earlier material from other publications, is being assembled and transferred to computer disks and microfilm where it will be

available for future use. In speaking of computer disk storage, it is noted that this method is being used to preserve also the works of Marx and Engels as well as those of at least one other important early Socialist writer. The committee thinks that this work may be of major importance for the working class of the future as well as our immediate needs.

Having noted all the statistics contained in the National Secretary's report and the superb efforts to preserve our written history, the committee recommends that:

Section members concentrate on contact work and use whatever literature is available to aid in this. We feel that at present contact work should take priority over all other activities. Our most important need is new members and the committee feels that, at present, intensive contact work is our best means to this end.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to strike the word "grim" from the first sentence in the fourth paragraph. On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

R. Burns presented the following report:

Re Resolution #1B

The resolution states "that ruling #5 in Organizational Norms and Procedures, p. 7 is detrimental to our *present* and *urgent* membership and sympathizer recruitment efforts and should be drastically revised or stricken from our activity guidelines."

Ruling #5 in Organizational Norms and Procedures clearly refers to participating in "rallies, forums, conventions, etc., held by other left organizations which are intended to build their own organizations."

Drastic revision or striking out this rule would leave the SLP wide open to be used by left-wing organizations in efforts to build their own organization.

We therefore recommend nonconcurrency.

Fraternally submitted,

43RD NATIONAL CONVENTION

[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER
Committee on General Activities and Organization

On motion, the report was adopted.

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick reported that the committee has found individuals to fill the positions of National Executive Committee and National Secretary and was prepared to make nominations.

New Business

The Recording Secretary informed the Chair that the members who were elected to the Mileage Committee were not the same members who signed that committee's report. The Chair instructed that the committee, as elected, review the report and resubmit it correctly signed. [See page 7.]

At 4:18 p.m. a motion was passed to recess until 5:30 p.m.

EVENING SESSION, MONDAY, MAY 5, 1997

The convention was called to order at 5:37 p.m.

On roll call, all present except M. James.

The Sergeant at Arms reported seven visitors present.

Reports of Committees

Mileage Committee

C. Camacho resubmitted the committee's report with the correct signatures. The report was accepted. [See page 84.]

Committee on Headquarters and Finances

B. Bortnick presented the following report:

Party Finances

This committee studied the National Secretary's report on "Party Finances" and supplementary materials provided to the committee by the National Secretary, including:

1. Proposed new lease and cost breakdowns for its various options over the duration of the lease.
2. 1997 financial figures through April.
3. Financial figures for years 1991–1996.

4. Income figures from estates and funds 1991–1996.

In addition, the committee conferred with Comrade Gunderson and the National Secretary on various aspects of the financial situation.

From this information, it is evident that the financial situation of the Party is critical, and that the continuing generous support of the membership will be necessary to ensure the Party's survival.

SLP Defense Fund

The SLP Defense Fund, launched in January of this year, has been a great success. Party members, realizing the urgent financial needs of the Party as detailed in the February 10th letter to the membership, responded in a most impressive manner. As of the National Convention Banquet almost \$48,000 had been received, and it is expected that late arriving contributions will push it all the way to the \$50,000 goal.

The National Office and the convention were greatly impressed by the response of the membership. It has helped to shore up the Party's reserves and allow the Party to look toward the future and the continuation of the Party's work. And, of course, that future will continue to require ongoing generous support.

Among the obligations that the Party must commit to is a new three-year lease on its office space starting July 31, 1997. Even with the release of the storage area used now for archives and the New York Labor News, this lease will represent a cost of about \$91,000 over the next three years.

In effect, after lease obligations have been covered, the reserves remaining to be used for all other purposes over the next three years amount to only \$94,700. ~~Beyond the lease, based on past expenditures, the Party will require another estimated \$490,000 over the next three years, or about \$163,000 per year in operating funds. Dividing the reserves into three equal portions to be used for operations (\$31,500 per year), this still leaves a shortfall of \$131,500 per year. Since the membership can be expected in general to raise little more than \$60,000 annually, there will be a significant shortfall.~~ It will thus be imperative that the N.O. reassess its costs and cut wherever possible, while retaining the activities needed to rebuild membership.

The N.O. thus needs to coordinate activities to prioritize and cut expenditures and to raise funds in a concerted effort to increase the membership and build stronger sections and a more effective organization. In the next months it will be

important for the NEC and the N.O. to continually monitor both the funds and the activities of the Party to assure that our resources are being used most effectively.

To provide ongoing funds to accomplish the goals of rebuilding, this committee makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. As a way of increasing income on an ongoing basis, promote the Sustainer Fund to the sections, members-at-large and sympathizers. To support this goal it is important for sections and members-at-large to step up contact work and other activities that can increase membership and financial support as rapidly as possible.

2. Continue to emphasize that members and sympathizers establish provisions to make the SLP a beneficiary upon their demise. These provisions can take the form of joint bank accounts, insurance beneficiary or bequests in a will.

3. Members should be advised that detailed information on these options and procedures can be found in the Party's pamphlet "Steps You Can Take to Provide for the Financial Security of the Socialist Labor Party," and that members and sympathizers should be encouraged to obtain copies of this manual.

Fraternally submitted,
[Signed] BERNARD BORTNICK, Chair
CHRIS CAMACHO, BRUCE COZZINI, DAVID GEIER,
PETER KAPITZ

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was made and seconded to strike the fourth sentence in the 11th paragraph. An amendment to the amendment was passed to strike the second and third sentences in the 11th paragraph. On motion, the amendment as amended was passed. On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

Committee on General Activities and Organization

R. Burns presented the following report:

State of the Organization

The committee reviewed the report and appreciates the thorough research and presentation of facts evidenced in the report. What can be learned by the array of facts and figures?

In general, the report's scenario is a picture of dwindling

membership, putting us on notice that something has to be done now to arrest this course. Building up the rank-and-file membership challenges all of us to add something to what we have been accustomed to doing or not doing. No one can question that more consistent leaflet distribution is needed. No one would question that an increase in all our traditional activities would help. Linking theory with practice, organizers of sections must talk to individual members about what they can do to start the ball rolling. Organizers must try more to encourage section members to find something in their individual ability to help the Party. A little more push, a little more shove, a little more encouragement. The National Office, to the best of its circumstances, must also contact organizers with a little more push and shove, perhaps by printing a more focused activity questioning form to be answered monthly. We certainly need more information flowing from sections to the National Office.

At another level, the members'-at-large situation presents a special problem. One-half of the present membership exists in an isolated and somewhat alienated manner.

The answer to this problem, like the answer to many other problems, must depend mainly in increasing membership and therefore increasing sections.

The committee deeply appreciates the greetings and information from our Canadian comrades.

Fraternally submitted,

[Signed] ROBERT P. BURNS, Chair
HENRY CORETZ, SID FINK, KARL H. HECK,
GEORGE S. TAYLOR, CHARLES TURNER

Committee on General Activities and Organization

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the report. An amendment was passed to strike the words "and somewhat alienated" in the last sentence of the third paragraph. On motion, the report as amended was adopted.

New Business

The Chair called upon the Committee on Headquarters and Finances to make its nominations for the National Executive Committee. B. Bortnick placed the following names in nomination: Donna Bills, Bernard Bortnick, Christian Camacho, Henry Coretz, Bruce Cozzini, David Geier and Michael R. Mahoney

The floor was opened for further nominations.

On motion, D. Bills, B. Bortnick, C. Camacho, H. Coretz, B. Cozzini, D. Geier and M.R. Mahoney were elected by acclamation to constitute the NEC for the 1997–1999 term of office.

The Chair called upon the committee to make its nomination for Editor of *The People*. The committee reported it had no nomination to make.

The floor was opened for nominations. There being none, the Chair called upon the committee to make its nomination for Financial Secretary.

The committee reported it had no nomination to make. The floor was opened to nominations. There being none, the Chair called upon the committee to make its nomination for National Secretary.

B. Bortnick placed the name of Robert Bills in nomination.

The floor was opened to further nominations.

On motion, by acclamation, Robert Bills was elected National Secretary for the 1997–1999 term of office.

R. Bills addressed the convention, as follows:

Comrades: Thank you for the confidence that you have placed in me.

National Conventions are very difficult things. They are tough on the delegates who must make all the important decisions, but without adequate time to reflect on the importance of the decisions they are compelled to make. Conventions also are difficult on someone in my position, who must organize and present a comprehensive, yet comprehensible, picture of the state of the Party to ease the delegates' way through the mass of information they must deal with. This convention was no exception in that respect, but I think it was an exceptional convention in another and more important respect. I think it can now be said that we are all in general agreement on the true nature of the problems our Party faces and on how to go about coming to grips with them. That is what has made this 43rd National Convention of the SLP such a great success.

The SLP today is short on members and it is short on cash, but there are some things that the SLP is not short on.

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There is no shortage of dedication and no shortage of determination among that core of the membership

Now we have the outlines of a clear-cut plan, a Party-building strategy, that we can pursue in an orderly and disciplined fashion, and a National Executive Committee to work out the particulars and to implement that strategy. We must move decisively on all this if we are to succeed, and that will require cooperation by all.

With every concerned and determined member taking their place on “the line,” with every member doing his or her duty, we will succeed in strengthening the SLP before the time comes to gather in National Convention two years hence.

Thank you. [Applause.]

On motion, the convention expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the National Headquarters staff for its efforts on behalf of the Socialist Labor Party. [Applause.]

On motion, the National Office was authorized to edit the minutes of these proceedings.

On motion, the minutes of Monday’s sessions were approved as read.

On motion, the minutes as a whole were approved.

On motion, the 43rd National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party adjourned *sine die* at 6:07 p.m.

[Signed] Fraternally submitted,
DAVID GEIER
Recording Secretary

[Signed] DONNA BILLS
Assistant to the Recording
Secretary